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SOMERSET MAUGHAM

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I

One of the difficulties involved in writing a critical essay on Somerset Maugham is that he seems to have made such an estimate unnecessary by writing it himself. In a number of prefaces and especially in *The Summing Up* he has described his career, stated his beliefs, and defined his limitations. He has been as honest with his readers as he has been with himself.

Though I have had variety of invention, and this is not strange since it is the outcome of the variety of mankind, I have had small power of imagination. I have taken living people and put them into the situations, tragic or comic, that their characters suggested. I might well say that they invented their own stories. I have been incapable of those great, sustained flights that carry the author on broad pinions into a celestial sphere. My fancy, never very strong, has been hampered by my sense of probability. I have painted easel pictures, not frescoes.

Such frankness, as Maugham himself points out, is likely to be dangerous to a writer's reputation. The Anglo-Saxon public likes its authors to have some mystery or romance surrounding them, to be less explicit and less rational about themselves than Maugham has been; it is not wise for an English writer to show that he has too much common sense. "Anthony Trollope ceased to be read for thirty years because he confessed that he wrote at regular hours and took care to get the best price he could for his work." And it is true that Maugham has been slighted or ignored by the critics. "In my

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twenties the critics said I was brutal, in my thirties they said I was flippant, in my forties they said I was cynical, in my fifties they said I was competent, and now in my sixties they say I am superficial." But the critics have not only branded Maugham with unflattering epithets; they have done something more harmful to his reputation than that—they have neglected him by putting him to one side of the main current of literature in his age. The age has been an age of experiment, and criticism has followed many of the writers in being more interested in experiment than in accomplishment along relatively traditional lines. It is easier to make critical comments on experimental than on conventional writing; there is more to explain and therefore more to say. And recent critics have been so conditioned by the historical sense, by the feeling that literary art, like evolutionary biology, must be continually developing new forms if it is to progress, that they conclude that an author who does not experiment with new forms is worth little attention. Most histories of contemporary literature give only a brief notice to Maugham.

But Maugham deserves better than this, and popular opinion has recognized the fact by not agreeing with the critics. One of Maugham's books, *Of Human Bondage*, is probably the most universally read and admired of modern English novels, and his plays have more vitality than those of any of his contemporaries, except Shaw. The problem for anyone trying to judge Maugham's permanent value is to decide whether the critics or the public are right.

II

In *The Summing Up* Maugham discusses his work under four main headings: style, drama, fiction, and philosophy. The division is a convenient one for a discussion of Maugham's merits. His style is one of his most individual characteristics; it is natural, fluent, and colloquial. But it was not formed without difficulty. In his earliest writings, such as *Liza of Lambeth*, the style is barely adequate to the description of the material, and there are passages even in his later works which are clumsy and occasionally almost ridiculous: "Her delicate features, the aristocratic shortness of her upper lip, and her wealth of fair hair suggested the marquise again, and it must have

been obvious, even if it were not notorious, that in her veins flowed the best blood in Chicago."

But a sentence like this is exceptional in Maugham's mature writing; for the most part his sentences say what he wants them to say in an economical and efficient manner. Though they are by his own confession the result of hard work, they seem natural and easy; what is perhaps more important, they reflect an individuality which is clearly recognizable. Maugham's tone is that of a man talking to a friend in a club; it is anecdotal, and conceals its real economy under an air of apparent garrulity. Occasionally this informality, this attitude of a somewhat artificially benevolent gossip, is overdone, and in the effort to be as natural as possible Maugham falls into a kind of artificiality in reverse. He has his technique so much at his finger ends that by playing with it as a child plays with a toy his deftness now and then defeats its purpose, and we sometimes feel that his way of saying a thing is more important to him than what he has to say. For example, in the short story called "Virtue," which tells how a woman's passion for a young man on leave from the East destroys her marriage and wrecks her life, Maugham begins with the sentence, "There are few things better than a good Havana," and only after a series of reflections on the labor required to produce man's pleasures, and the enormous consequences attendant on trivial incidents, does he eventually come to the story itself. He uses the same device of informality in *Cakes and Ale* and in several of his later books, and, though it is captivating and disarming on a first reading, it has often lost its charm when we re-read.

This deftness of style is of course closely connected with a technical deftness on a larger scale—the deftness with which Maugham orders his events and manipulates the sequence of his actions. Particularly in such later novels as *Cakes and Ale* and *Christmas Holiday* Maugham carries over into the arrangement of his plot the same studied informality and deliberate casualness which is characteristic of his verbal style. He moves from one chronological level to another and back again with the agility of an acrobat—and it is a pleasure for anyone concerned with craftsmanship to watch the dexterity of his movements and the general niftiness—there is no other word—of his manner. Watching Maugham move about

among the elements of his later stories is like watching a fish in the water; both are completely at home. It is this which the critics refer to when they describe him as "competent." It is this too which perhaps justifies them in not applying, at least to Maugham's later fiction, a more enthusiastic adjective. We tend to become suspicious of a verbal or narrative technique that is too smoothly oiled or that moves with so obvious an efficiency; we wonder if our pleasure does not come rather from seeing the acrobat move than from reflecting upon the significance of his movements. Maugham's later technique is a technique that almost deliberately limits his emotional range; it is admirably adapted for irony, for dispassionate observation, for swift-moving narrative, for a tolerant, common-sense, man-of-the-world point of view. But it is not a technique that is of much use in describing strong feeling or passionate thought; it perhaps defines Maugham's limitations to say that it is impossible to think of any of his later stories (I am excluding *Of Human Bondage*) as being in any way symbolic of a great or general human situation. They are always in prose; poetry does not touch them as poetry touches the novels of Tolstoy, of Thomas Mann, or even Hardy. T. S. Eliot has said of Hardy's writing that it sometimes reaches sublimity without having passed through the stage of being good. Maugham's prose is frequently good but never reaches sublimity. His stories are limited in time and, as it were, limited in space—they have no fourth dimension. It is this deficiency no doubt to which Maugham refers when he says that he has had "small power of imagination." His picture of the artist in *The Moon and Sixpence*, and that of the novelist in *Cakes and Ale*, are pictures of particular artists in particular situations, not of the artist in general; in his presentation of them we miss that final probing insight which reveals the universal through the particular.

III

Maugham's career as a novelist falls roughly into two main periods: the first from *Liza of Lambeth* (1897) through *Of Human Bondage* (1915); the second from *Cakes and Ale* (1922) through *Christmas Holiday* (1939), including the short stories. The best novels of the first period, *Liza* and *Mrs. Craddock*, are straightforward books in the late-nineteenth-century realistic tradition.

They have two main virtues: their dialogue is natural and convincing, and their main characters are firmly and clearly conceived. *Mrs. Craddock*, for example, tells the story of a young mistress of a manor—ardent, handsome, and passionate—who falls in love with a young farmer almost solely on physical grounds, marries him, and discovers that they are temperamentally, and hence in every other way, unsuited to each other. The development of this misunderstanding, the way Mrs. Craddock's sensitive and high-strung nature continually dashes itself, only to its own harm, on the rock of her husband's uncomprehending and complacent stolidity—this is excellently done, and the character of the husband, particularly, remains firmly in the reader's memory. It is not, of course, a great novel, but it is a solid piece of work, filling with no gaps and no slopping-over at the edges the somewhat limited frame that was planned for it.

The later novels are quite different. Their technique is much more personal, and so is their tone; their structure is not so tight, and they have about them an air of easy freedom which is partly the result of technical deftness and partly the result of Maugham's own attitude to his characters and to his subject. Maugham makes a great deal of use of the first person singular. To consider how he does this is perhaps the best way to describe his merits and his limitations.

All novelists are concerned with the problem of point of view—the problem of where to stand, and make the reader stand, when considering events and characters. The use of the first person—though some novelists, like Henry James, have attacked it—is one of the most obvious and one of the most valuable answers to the problem. It not only gives verisimilitude and direction; it also gives a particular tone. Dostoevski, for example, uses it in this fashion very cleverly: the unnamed and, on the whole, unobtrusive narrator in *The Possessed* is an all-knowing gossip who reports conversations and actions as he has heard and seen them and who, in addition to being an eyewitness, is a kind of commentator, chorus, or representative of the normal point of view in the middle of violent and outrageous occurrences. Conrad—in a more indirect way—does the same thing through the character of Marlow, who is an objectification of Conrad's own attitude to the situation he describes.

Maugham uses the first person in all three ways: to make the

story sound is if it actually happened, to give it a particular tone or philosophical atmosphere, and to add the salt of a more normal point of view to the otherwise unreasoned violence or peculiarity of the main characters. As a result Maugham's "I" is often one of the most important figures in the narrative. He generalizes about human nature, reveals his personal habits and tastes, and directs our feelings toward the action.

The character of that direction is what, to a great extent, limits the range of these later novels. It reflects pretty closely Maugham's own attitude to life, which, after all, is only a more mellow version of the philosophy he had arrived at when he was a medical student: "I learnt that men were moved by a savage egoism, that love was only the dirty trick nature played on us to achieve the continuation of the species, and I decided that, whatever aims men set themselves, they were deluded, for it was impossible for them to aim at anything but their own selfish pleasures." The "I" of the later novels, to be sure, is not so harsh as that; he has had his edges rubbed smooth by worldly success, and he is more ready to recognize human goodness. But the basic view is the same, and as a result Maugham's picture of human nature is, as I have said, limited. It makes one very important omission; it leaves out moral struggle and the grandeur that comes from moral struggle. Maugham's people are swayed by various motives—vanity, passion, ambition—but, since there is no real standard of action in a world that has no meaning, there is nothing for them to aim for, and they are merely to be observed tolerantly and somewhat ironically as they are caught in the current of their desires.

The same thing is true of Maugham's best plays. The drama, even perhaps more than fiction, demands a standard, if only a social standard, against which individual behavior can be seen; if the standard is not there, the conflict essential to drama is likely to disappear. Maugham realizes this, and a social standard is presented; but it is—as in *Caesar's Wife*, for example—an *ad hoc* standard, something which Maugham puts in because he realizes it is necessary for his drama rather than because it is a part of his belief. That is why many of his plays, successful as they are, too obviously seem "made"; they do not give us (with one or two exceptions, such as

The Sacred Flame) that sense of organic unity which we feel in the finest drama. The standards or conventions used by Maugham are, as far as his own beliefs are concerned, out of date, which is one way of saying that he sometimes gives the impression of being insincere.

Maugham has often remarked that he considers it his chief function as a novelist merely to entertain; it is one of the several confessions that have turned the critics against him. They have said that Maugham, after writing *Of Human Bondage*, made, artistically speaking, *il gran rifiuto* and, by thinking of his job on such a relatively low level, removed himself from serious consideration. This, however—in spite of what I have been saying about the limitations of his later novels—is neither entirely fair nor entirely true. Maugham never again chose so large a canvas or planned so deep a set of perspectives because he never again had the materials to fill it in; it was only sensible of him to limit his scale to the “easel pictures” he could so cleverly, and often so delightfully, compose.

IV

I have excluded *Of Human Bondage* from the foregoing remarks because it is by common consent Maugham's best novel and the one which gives him a claim to being considered a first-class writer. It remains to be seen whether this claim can be justified.

There are, we may say, four things which we look for in a serious work of fiction: (1) an organization of incident which produces the illusion that the sequence of events is necessary and inevitable; (2) a set of characters whose relation to the events is equally inevitable and in whom we can believe; (3) a physical, social, or geographical setting which forms a fitting background for the events and characters; and (4) a moral, intellectual, or metaphysical climate which creates the standard by which, more or less unconsciously, both the author and the reader judge the behavior of the characters. This last requirement, one which is usually overlooked, may be for a certain type of novel the most important of all. For example, the implications of the characters and the action in *Moby Dick* are in a sense more significant than the action that the characters perform. They universalize the individual events by giving them a symbolic meaning; we have, in other words, the feeling of a fourth dimension to

which I have already referred. The problem in criticizing *Of Human Bondage* is to determine whether or not this quality can be found in it or whether it is merely, like the *Forsyte Saga*, a kind of sublimated reporting limited to a given time and place.

There is no doubt about the conviction of reality which we receive from the book; Philip Carey's childhood, his uncle, the school at Tercanbury, his years abroad, and his struggle to find a satisfactory way of existence are all described with honesty, fidelity, and conviction. The material is almost entirely autobiographical, and Maugham has told us himself that he was virtually forced to write the book in order to get the subject matter out of his system. The difference between the first three-quarters of the book and the last quarter, the part describing Philip's marriage, which, according to Maugham, is largely wish fulfilment, shows how necessary it is for Maugham, if he is to write convincingly, to rely fairly solidly on what he himself has seen and felt. For the last section of the book, "competent" as it is, has not the strength and the authority of the earlier part. Like the happy ending of Hardy's *Return of the Native*, it is a kind of excrescence on the original organic structure.

It is, then, the first three-quarters of the book that we must consider most seriously. Apart from the fact that we can believe without question in the people and the events which Maugham describes, there are two things in this part of the novel which impress most readers: the love affair with Mildred, and the search for a pattern in human experience. There is no doubt that Maugham's description of his hero's violent infatuation has more intensity than that which he has given to any other similar situation. The *odi et amo* of Catullus has found no more vivid presentation in modern fiction than this. The contrast between the strength of emotion and the unworthiness of its object, which is one of the most painful of human experiences, Maugham here describes in a manner which all who have shared that experience can recognize. Not only are the individual scenes between Mildred and Philip admirably handled but their sequence—the development of the relation between the two—is as psychologically true as it is powerfully described.

And yet, excellent as it is, if we compare it with another handling of the same situation, it may perhaps be clear why it is difficult to

attribute to Maugham's description the final, inner artistic vision which I have mentioned as the fourth requirement of a great novel. When Shakespeare's Troilus realizes that his Cressida is unworthy of his feelings for her, he makes that realization the opening wedge for a frightening view into the gulf between appearance and reality which involves every range of thought and feeling. To him it is merely one aspect of a whole view of life; the most excruciating, but not the only, evidence of the gap between what the will and the mind can desire and what the limited, hampering body can perform.

Shakespeare, of course, is writing a poetic drama, not a novel, and as a result he has more opportunity for creating poetic intensity. The comparison between him and Maugham has only a limited value. Nevertheless, there is a "fourth-dimensional" character to Shakespeare's view of Troilus which is missing in Maugham's view of Philip, and we must recognize this lack if we are to keep our standards clear. The difference, to be sure, is not merely a difference in individual ability or vision; it is also a reflection of a difference between two periods in history. Shakespeare's world was based on a concept of unity; when that unity, through the realization of individual perfidy, was apparently smashed, tragedy was the result. Maugham's age gave him no unity; the only order known to Philip—that of his uncle's beliefs—was a shoddy sort of order, and the smashing of it brought, not tragedy, but freedom. Life, like the famous Persian rug given to Philip by Cronshaw, has no pattern at all. "Life was insignificant and death without consequence," Philip discovers; and this discovery is a release and a satisfaction: "His insignificance was turned to power, and he felt himself suddenly equal with the cruel fate which had seemed to persecute him; for, if life was meaningless, the world was robbed of its cruelty. . . . He had not been so happy for months."

Obviously this kind of resolution lacks the intensity of a tragic resolution, and the success of *Of Human Bondage* as a whole is a limited success. It has not, for example, the lyrical intensity which we sometimes find in such a comparable work as Arnold Bennett's *Old Wives Tale*; there is nothing in Maugham like Sophia's reflections over the body of Gerald Scales. *Of Human Bondage* is not one of those novels which press us urgently into new areas of awareness;

it merely fills out, in its moving, efficient, and vivid way, those areas of awareness which we already possess. Superior as it is to anything else Maugham has written, it is still, to use his own words, an "easel picture" and not a "fresco."

Maugham has rounded out his life's work in his intellectual and artistic biography, *The Summing Up*. We find here, as we would expect, a reflection of the same temperament that is expressed in the novels. It is an admirable book; sensible, clear, and full of an honest and not too worldly wisdom. Next to *Of Human Bondage* it is the most likely of his works to survive, for it is not only an expression of Maugham's own point of view, it is also representative of what many people in Maugham's generation believe. It is, truly, "what oft was thought but ne'er so well expressed." But it too is not the work of an imaginative mind; its philosophy is the philosophy of the present and the practical—it does not play with original concepts or mold any unity that does not already exist. For Maugham there are no eternal silences.

V

But if we are to exclude Maugham from the very top rank of contemporary writers that does not mean that we can dismiss him entirely. His honesty, his craftsmanship, and his admirable gifts for arousing interest and holding attention make him the kind of writer whom it is always a pleasure, and sometimes a stimulus, to read. If literature is to flourish, there must always be, in any given generation, a number of writers who take their work seriously as a craft, who look with unfailing curiosity and interest at human behavior, and who consider the description of that behavior one of the chief justifications for living. Writers of this kind are essential both for keeping our sensitivities alive and for preserving that common basis of value and tradition which must always be the groundwork for writing of the superior kind. Among such writers Maugham holds a high place, and to deny him our respect were to deny respect to the art he has served so long and so well.

RECENT DISCUSSION OF SWIFT

RICARDO QUINTANA¹

In 1745 Jonathan Swift died in the Deanery at Dublin. For upward of thirty years he had been a public personality, but fame had been slow in coming to him. Until middle age, in fact, he was disregarded in Ireland and almost unheard of in England. The fault—if there can be any fault in such matters—lay partly within himself, for his intellect and talent were slow to mature, and he was almost thirty before he succeeded in shaking himself loose from those perplexities and ambiguities of thought and style that usually pass away with adolescence. But there were other reasons for his obscurity, and over these he had little control. An Anglo-Irish vicar of relatively undistinguished parentage, no matter how great his talents, could not hope to achieve prominence in the great world of London unless fate intervened with extraordinary solicitude. Up to the autumn of 1710 fate showed no disposition to treat him with more than her characteristic indifference; and the vicar of Laracor watched the years slip by and steeled himself to endure obscurity. It was then that fate relented. In a year or two, thanks to his alliance with Harley and the Tories, Swift achieved power, reputation, and—most important of all—a literary public. It was enough that luck had been with him once; thereafter he could master adversity, and when he returned to Ireland as an exile in 1714 he returned to become the Patriot Dean, the triumphant adversary of Walpole and the Whig administration, and the author of *Gulliver's Travels*.

Swift's fame, not attained until middle age, was an assured one in eighteenth-century England. He was not always understood even within the civilization to which he belonged, and toward the close of the Enlightenment many voices were raised against him in denunciation; but his imperious personality continued to be felt, and his power as a satiric artist was acknowledged again and again. The nineteenth century was not sure of Swift, or rather the nineteenth-century crit-

¹ Professor of English at the University of Wisconsin and author of *The Mind and Art of Jonathan Swift* (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1936).

ics parted company with one another over their estimates of him. Some of them reviled him as a man; others defended him; often, like Thackeray, they repudiated both his personality and his satiric themes, at the same time testifying to the magnificent power of his prose.

What of Swift's reputation in our own time? It can be said, I think, not only that the present day finds Swift very much alive but that it sees him as a markedly different personality from the one that Thackeray, for instance, was talking about in his lectures in 1851. If there are aspects of Swift that still defy analysis, he is generally better understood today—as a man, as a public character, as an artist—than perhaps at any time since the earlier eighteenth century.

If the entire Augustan age of English letters has been restored, as far as the general reader goes, to something like popularity, it is still true that of the great neo-classical writers only Pope has come anywhere near holding his own with Swift as a subject of modern criticism and scholarship. Essays about Swift, biographies, editions of his works, learned articles, monographs, bibliographies—for a number of years these have been coming out at such a rate that only the Swift specialist (shades of the Grand Academy of Lagado!) can be supposed to have kept track of them all. Naturally, the quality of this work has been uneven. Not every critical essay has brought to us perceptions at once sound and striking, and not all the "scholarly" writing—even when scholarly—has justified itself by significant conclusions. But, taken as a whole, the body of modern criticism and scholarship concerned with Swift has been of a pretty high order. It has succeeded, at least, in doing what criticism and scholarship set out to do—that is, to bring a past age and a great writer's character and accomplishment into increasingly clearer focus.

The great interest which the present generation of scholars and critics has taken in Swift can be accounted for in several ways. To suggest that there has been a return to Swift would perhaps be false, for no matter what mistaken estimates of him have held sway he has never been rejected by the general reader, and it is sometimes forgotten that there were Victorians like Forster who held him in high esteem. But it seems clear that our age has approached Swift in a

manner and spirit of its own. The change which has come about in our entire feeling for neo-classical literature has placed Swift in a somewhat different light. And at the same time the intensive study of the eighteenth century from the point of view of intellectual history has suggested a number of new approaches to one of the representative minds of the period.

That shift in taste—a twentieth-century phenomenon—which has resulted in the decline of the romantics and the rise of the Augustans, is sometimes dismissed as nothing more than intellectual snobbery, confined to a comparatively small group. That something in the nature of a neo-classical cult has been at work is not to be denied—a cult which has attracted the oversophisticated as well as those merely seeking to be fashionable. But no one in touch with modern criticism, poetry, and the small but significant body of first-rate modern novels can doubt for a moment that the modern literary temper has veered sharply away from romantic thought and feeling. In doing so it has brought us to a position from which it has been possible, for the first time in almost a century and a half, to appraise the neo-classical civilization in a spirit quite free of commitments. Looking at the eighteenth-century writers in this way, without animus and with no particular envy, we are perceiving in them a good many characteristics that strike us as wholly admirable. Their lack of illusion, their hatred of cant, their magnificent contempt of all transcendentalism—a term they did not use but one for which they had adequate substitutes—today excite a favorable response, for what used to seem spiritual shallowness will necessarily be differently estimated by an age like ours, which has witnessed the self-betrayal of idealism. Again, the neo-classical concern with artistic statement, so much in excess of its concern with thematic material *per se*, suggests a theory of literature and values which is instinctively understood in an era of far-reaching technical experimentalism like the present. But perhaps the aspect of neo-classical literature which particularly appeals to us is that which has to do with tone and intonation. The Augustans were masters of intonation, and we are beginning to understand why. They were at ease in verse and prose because, sure of their public, literature was for them as much a social activity as an artistic one. Knowing as we do the

difficulties which beset writers who must stand outside society if they are to preserve their integrity, we can see in this eighteenth-century intimacy between writer and public the source of a peculiar literary effectiveness and grace.

Swift shares to the full these neo-classical characteristics; and as they come to be better understood, so does he. His hatred of transcendentalism, which used to be pointed to as evidence of a perverted heart, has for us the estimable hardness of his age. As an artist he is also typical. The Swift that has shocked and revolted so many readers—and fascinated them—is really no psychopath; his logic, whether of thought or of emotion, is nine times out of ten normal enough. The shock derives from the statement that he accords his theme rather than from the theme itself. In this sense *A Tale of a Tub*, the last book of *Gulliver's Travels*, and verses like "The Lady's Dressing Room" are triumphs of calculated artistry. The key to Swift is not the neuroses from which he may or may not have suffered but his magnificent craftsmanship, which ought to be plain to all eyes.

Thus, in a number of ways, the contemporary study of Swift owes much to the broad critical reassessment of Neo-classicism. But the history of ideas and particularly the recent investigations into the intellectual history of the English Enlightenment have played an important part. Swift, in whom the assumptions and theories of an entire age are so firmly patterned, must be taken in context if any progress is to be made toward rightly interpreting his formal thought and his instinctive attitudes. Once he is seen against the intellectual background of the post-Restoration period many problems which used to vex and mislead his critics—problems concerning his explicit theories, his intended meanings, even his conduct—are quickly resolved. To place Swift in context is now the concern of many scholars interested in the history of ideas.

A résumé of modern Swift scholarship may well begin by noting the work of recent editors. Professor Nichol Smith's edition of Swift's letters to Charles Ford² contains much new material which throws a stronger, if not an entirely new, light upon those personal qualities which made Swift the friend of so many cultivated men of the world. Furthermore, the correspondence with Ford enables us

² *The Letters of Jonathan Swift to Charles Ford* (Oxford, 1935).

to date with greater accuracy the various stages in the composition of *Gulliver's Travels*. Harold Williams' three-volume edition³ of the verse—a notable example of modern bibliographical and textual work—will, I believe, in time bring about a new critical assessment of Swift the poet. Herbert Davis' edition of *The Drapier's Letters*⁴ is another work of major importance by reason of the text, the bibliographical notes, and the splendid historical commentary. As is generally known, Davis is now at work upon an edition of Swift's complete prose, which will extend to fourteen volumes and will, when finished, supersede the Bohn Library edition by Temple Scott. The first of these volumes, containing *A Tale of a Tub*,⁵ the *Battle of the Books*, and other early pieces, is now available in this country. There have been rumors, too, that a fourth editor is now proceeding with a new edition of Swift's collected correspondence, the value of which will depend in the first instance upon such new material as can be presented. Lastly, Arthur E. Case's recent edition of *Gulliver's Travels*⁶ should be mentioned because it states so clearly the textual problems involved, and because it sets forth a new and very interesting interpretation of the political allegory and allusions of the first and third books. Swift has been rarely fortunate in his modern editors. It goes without saying that valid criticism of an author is greatly facilitated when accurate texts are available.

Biographical studies of Swift have been so numerous of late as to become almost a laughing matter. Some of these may be disregarded, but there are many which the modern reader will find helpful. Carl Van Doren's *Swift*⁷ is restrained and to the point. The studies by Stephen Gwynn⁸ and of Bertram Newman⁹ are both sound. More detailed and more acute is Emile Pons's volume¹⁰ devoted to Swift's

³ *The Poems of Jonathan Swift* (Oxford, 1937).

⁴ *The Drapier's Letters to the People of Ireland* (Oxford, 1935).

⁵ *A Tale of a Tub, with Other Early Works: 1696-1707* (Oxford, 1939). Volume I of *The Prose Writings of Jonathan Swift*.

⁶ New York, 1938.

⁷ New York, 1930.

⁸ *The Life and Friendships of Dean Swift* (New York, 1933).

⁹ *Jonathan Swift* (London, 1937).

¹⁰ *Swift: Les Années de jeunesse et le "Conte du tonneau"* (Strasbourg and London, 1925).

early years—a book for the specialist, perhaps, but informed throughout by magnificent critical intelligence. It is good to know that Pons intends to follow up his first volume by others dealing with Swift's later career.

Perhaps it should be mentioned that there has been of late a noticeable and happy tendency on the part of the biographers to avoid sensational treatment of what used to be regarded as the mysteries in Swift's life. I refer to the question of a marriage to Stella, to the Vanessa incident, and to psychopathic problems. Maxwell Gold,¹¹ it is true, has re-argued the case in favor of a marriage; and both Gold and Jackson¹² have been tempted to analyze Swift through psychiatry, Gold finding sexual anesthesia as defined by Krafft-Ebing, Jackson a mother-complex with "other complications." But most of the biographers—and I think the public is with them here—have become rather weary both of debates over a meaningless marriage which may or may not have taken place and of amateur psychiatry. In regard to Stella, Swift's sentiments were set forth with exquisite clarity in the birthday verses addressed to her, and with these lines to guide one further curiosity seems aimless. As for those aspects of his personality which have led to suggestions of mental illness, many of them are open to a quite different interpretation; and a different emphasis will be placed on them, I think, as our fuller knowledge of Swift's public career makes his energy and purpose apparent.

There are many items in the way of scholarly articles and monographs which will repay careful study, and the announcements to be found in *Work in Progress* promise much else that the specialist, at least, is awaiting with interest. Several scholars are working on Swift's political and religious thought, and Paul Spenser Wood is engaged in a study of Swift as a literary critic. Two fairly recent articles by Dean Nicolson and Miss Mohler¹³ on the scientific background of *Gulliver's Travels* ought to be read by everyone called on

¹¹ *Swift's Marriage to Stella* (Cambridge, Mass., 1937).

¹² Robert Wyse Jackson, *Jonathan Swift, Dean and Pastor* (London, 1939).

¹³ Marjorie Nicolson and Nora M. Mohler, "The Scientific Background of Swift's *Voyage to Laputa*," *Annals of Science*, II (1937), 299-334, and "Swift's 'Flying Island' in the *Voyage to Laputa*," *ibid.*, pp. 405-30.

to discuss this satire. *Jonathan Swift, Dean and Pastor*, by the Reverend Robert W. Jackson, I should place before the three or four German and French monographs of recent years. Jackson is not, it seems to me, particularly happy in his Appendix on the psychology of Swift, and there are historical problems concerning Swift's religious thought which he has not sensed, but he does well his main business of reasserting Swift's honesty as churchman and pastor, and in this Jackson reflects the recent trend of opinion. This monograph is interesting, furthermore, because the author, being a clergyman in Ireland, brings to bear upon his subject something of the traditions of the Irish church.

A word should be said about the kind of study in the history of ideas which is concerned in no direct way with Swift but which suggests, nevertheless, many approaches to his thought. Such a study, to take one example from many, is Ernest Campbell Mossner's *Bishop Butler and the Age of Reason*.¹⁴ No one interested in Swift can read this without perceiving that here is really an introduction to Swift's religion on the theoretical side, though I believe that Mossner barely refers to Swift. Similarly, the nature of Swift's political, social, ethical, and critical thought is charged with new significance as the intellectual history of the Enlightenment is extended. Viewed against the proper background, Swift's thought no longer seems strange and paradoxical. Is *A Tale of a Tub* sacrilegious? The question must seem preposterous to anyone who has informed himself about post-Restoration Anglicanism, for Swift's satire is a consummate statement of the Anglican *via media*, and it is true to this Anglican tradition not alone in intellectual analysis but quite as much in emphasis.

Finally, there are the critical essays, about which, since they are perhaps better known, less need be said than about the scholarship. The essays of Nichol Smith¹⁵ are prized by all students of Swift, for besides writing with rare charm and distinction, Smith has a way of anticipating by some years the newer critical perceptions. A much

¹⁴ *Bishop Butler and the Age of Reason: A Study in the History of Thought* (New York, 1936).

¹⁵ "Jonathan Swift: Some Observations," in *Essays by Divers Hands* (Transactions of the Royal Society of Literature, XIV [1935], 29-48).

younger writer, W. B. C. Watkins, has recently published an admirable series of essays entitled *Perilous Balance*,¹⁶ the first of which, "Absent Thee from Felicity," is a study of Swift's "tragic genius."

An article of this kind—designed to be of some assistance to readers and teachers who happen not to be specialists in eighteenth-century literary studies—would defeat its purpose if it were more than suggestive and selective. Furthermore, being essentially a guide to recent books, essays, and articles, it cannot attempt with much grace anything in the nature of a critical summing-up of Swift as he stands revealed to us today. There is only one point here—I have already touched on it—that I should like to make. There was a time when conventional criticism dwelt at great length upon the so-called unimaginative quality of English literature between "Lycidas" and *The Lyrical Ballads*. There are, of course, certain all-important differences—qualitative and psychological—between eighteenth-century literary art and the art of the preceeding and following epochs, and these differences ought to be analyzed at length. But the older critical view that I am speaking of was much of the time not really concerned with analysis at all; it was eager to assert, through pseudo-analysis, the superiority of "imaginative," especially of romantic, literature. It may be that criticism must forever have its roots in the instinctive prejudices or values enforced on us by the period we live in; but, however that may be, we today have at least the illusion of possessing a more objective critical approach to literary values. If eighteenth-century literature is different from nineteenth-century literature, that tells us little about the peculiar quality of either neo-classical or romantic art. The recognition that there is a neo-classical art and the disposition to study it as a thing that can be altogether admirable in itself—here are the grounds of the modern critique of the eighteenth-century writers. Swift was a bitter realist; he made fun of the idealistic pretensions of the poet; he regarded any sort of transcendentalism as arrant enthusiasm; he sought deflating imagery and the styptic force of words. Today we do not seek to challenge such assumptions but to understand them in the historical spirit. Thereafter, we are free to turn to Swift's incomparable satiric artistry and to enjoy it in a spirit unembarrassed by critical ambiguities.

¹⁶ *Perilous Balance: the Tragic Genius of Swift, Johnson, and Sterne* (Princeton, 1939).

ETHICAL SYMBOLISM IN CONRAD

JAMES V. FLETCHER¹

Finding good reasons for not liking Conrad seems to be very easy these days, just as easy as it was difficult fifteen years ago. In some literary circles his whole attitude toward life is held to have slight relation to modern problems, and with some people it has even become fashionable to look with amusement upon one's former susceptibility to his colorful and exotic style. But there is only one real reason for disliking Conrad—or for setting one's self against him, which is what it usually amounts to—and that is temperamental incompatibility. His stories are, above all, lyrical, and make their appeal to temperament, not to intellect; and all attempts to find elaborate intellectual structures in his work are vain. He has appeared recondite to some students only because they have refused to credit his own explicit statements of his point of view. If we proceed from those statements to an examination of his writing, perhaps his ethics and psychology may become transparently simple.

What Conrad stood for, and what he reveals, as he says "in every third line" of what he wrote, is an ethics of noble simplicity: "Those who read me know my conviction that the world, the temporal world, rests on a few very simple ideas; so simple that they must be as old as the hills. It rests notably, among others, on the idea of Fidelity." To complete the statement he would have added courage, love, pity, and idealism. To reduce the list to the three most important he would have mentioned fidelity, which to him really embraces love; idealism, which in his view means devotion to legitimate illusions; and courage. To explain at length how these ethical ideas are applied in his work would be to labor the obvious. I aim merely to show how his ethics led him to classify his characters into four rather distinct and persistent personality types—types that stand as ethical symbols in his most important fiction.

Conrad's four temperamental types are most clearly presented

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in *Lord Jim*. Since that novel is used so frequently as a text, perhaps an outline of the types as found there will be suggestive to instructors. The type that concerns Conrad most is what may be conveniently labeled the egocentric compulsive type. All the characters in this category are introverted and are driven by a compelling ego fantasy. Without exception they are men of more than ordinary talent who easily distinguish themselves by virtue of their abilities, but who fail their associates (or themselves) in crises because of deep-seated manias. They are Conrad's fallen angels, with whom he is not entirely well pleased but in whom he is far more interested than in the more solid types. Jim is the most complete sketch of this type that Conrad ever made. Captain Brierly, in the same book, is his counterpart. In other stories the type is represented notably by Axel Heyst in *Victory*; Kurtz in "Heart of Darkness"; Nostromo; Falk; and Razumov in *Under Western Eyes*.

Contrasted with this type in *Lord Jim* is Conrad's ideal type of man, as represented by Marlow and Stein. These men are motivated, too, by a set of ideals or symbols, which Conrad calls illusions. But, in addition, they have roots in life and are effectively related to society in their practical activities. Conrad takes pains to show that Stein has both these sides, in contrast to Jim who is locked within himself and who compulsively shuns certain crucial responsibilities. Stein is passionately devoted to his butterflies, which are symbols of the beautifully perfect private world that he wishes to create for himself, just as Tom Lingard's brig was "his perfect world full of trustful joy" (*The Rescue*, p. 54); but he is able at the same time to cope unhesitatingly with violently dangerous situations and to show practical concern for others. In other books Conrad introduces men of this same perfect balance: Captain Anthony and Powell in *Chance*; the narrator in *The Shadow Line*; Tom Lingard in *The Rescue*; Haldin in *Under Western Eyes*; Marlow, *passim*; Charles Gould in *Nostromo*; and many others. These characters sometimes meet with tragic ends but they are never betrayed by what is false within. They are moved to noble action by the force of their ideals but they remain realistic and understanding in the carrying-out of their intentions. Besides these qualities the balanced type possesses a touch of femininity. In *Chance* Conrad takes a whole page to explain that

Marlow has feminine perceptions and characteristics whereas Fyne is strictly masculine. Marlow himself admits this touch of femininity:

That small portion of "femininity," that drop of superior essence . . . has saved me from one or two misadventures in my life. . . . Observe that I say "femininity," a privilege—not "feminism," an attitude. . . . It was Fyne who on certain solemn grounds had adopted that mental attitude; but it was enough to glance at him sitting on one side, to see that he was purely masculine to his finger tips, masculine solidly, densely, amusingly,—hopelessly.

Conrad understood men well enough to know the limitations of the exclusively masculine male, and his understanding of the woman in man is much better than his understanding of woman herself.

A third type is the reliable, salt-of-the-earth man who is thoroughly steadfast, rather phlegmatic, and equipped with a minimum of imagination and intuition. In *Lord Jim* Conrad introduces the old French lieutenant (the officer who stood ready at the stern of the "Patna" to cut the hawser should the disabled ship sink while it was being towed) for the purpose of contrasting his reliability and steadfastness with the weakness of Jim. This type of man, says Conrad, is the "raw material of great reputations," and is finally buried "without drums and trumpets under the foundations of monumental successes." He has insufficient imagination to be a Napoleon but enough fidelity to a trust to be indispensable to Napoleon's success. He has a simple code of honorable duty which he follows unreflectingly. Characters of this type are found nearly as frequently in Conrad's stories as those of the first type, probably because they form such an effective background for the other types. Some of the most memorable are Singleton in *The Nigger of the Narcissus*; Captain MacWhirr in "Typhoon"; Giorgio Viola and Captain Mitchell in *Nostromo*; Captain Whalley in "The End of the Tether"; Fyne in *Chance*; Hermann in "Falk"; Giles and Ransome in *The Shadow Line*; and innumerable stalwarts in the shorter tales. Except in "Typhoon" and "The End of the Tether" Conrad does not use men of this class as central characters.

Belonging to the fourth type are Conrad's movie villains. His real villains, of course, are tragic flaws in character, natural forces, and chance, but sometimes human beings of an exceptionally de-

based breed help to spin the tragic plot. The Gentleman Brown in *Lord Jim* is archetypal. He has no illusions and lives in cunning defiance of society. Chester, in the same book, is somewhat more believable, but Conrad touches his portrait with an obvious stroke when he makes him a commercial explorer of guano islands. Chester prides himself on being free of illusions, upon seeing life just as it is. "You must see things exactly as they are. . . . I made it a practice never to take anything to heart," he says to Marlow. Other representatives of the type are Jones and Ricardo in *Victory*, Donkin in *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, Sortillo in *Nostromo*, Heemskirk in "Freya of the Seven Isles," and Nikita, breaker of eardrums and faithless to both sides, in *Under Western Eyes*. They all take the nearest way to their objectives in entire disregard of their human obligations.

The relation of these protopsychological types to Conrad's ethics is clear. Characters of the ideal type, as represented by Stein and Marlow, are prompted by all the Conradian virtues. In the first place, they have courage—the spiritual strength to match the violence of life with adequate fortitude; they have the "inborn ability [which Jim just missed having] to look temptations straight in the face . . . an unthinking and blessed stiffness before the outward and inward terrors, before the might of nature, and the seductive corruption of men—backed by a faith invulnerable to the strength of facts, to the contagion of example, to the solicitation of ideas." This "faith," which makes courage strong, is really the simple and enduring belief in an ideal, in one of the intangible principles by which men live together and achieve some measure of solidarity. It is, in other words, the "strength of illusions," which means so much to Conrad, and which always distinguishes his interesting men from the "good, stupid kind we like to feel marching right and left of us in life." In addition to courage and idealism they are possessed of the most important of all the virtues in Conrad's simple scale—fidelity to the human brotherhood. Conrad is careful never to allow his ideal men to betray other human beings. And, more positively, he invents occasions for them to display their magnanimity and their concern for the tragically distressed. Striking instances are

Marlow's and Stein's solicitousness for Jim, Captain Anthony's sensitive heroism in rescuing Flora de Barral, Dr. Monygham's selfless devotion to Emilia Gould, the narrator's concern for his hidden cabin mate in "The Secret Sharer," Tom Lingard's unselfish befriending of Hassim and Immada in *The Rescue*, and the young captain's fervent sympathy for his sick crew in *The Shadow Line*.

The ethical difference between this ideal type and the type to which Jim belongs is that Jim and his kind lack the elementary virtue of courage to actualize their ideals in crises. In addition to this shortcoming they have not the simple feeling of solidarity with other human beings that characterizes men of Marlow's type and men of the practical-unimaginative type. Superficially different as Falk, Nostromo, Kurtz, Brierly, Razumov, Heyst, and Jim may be, they all have certain failings in common: they are all crippled in their moral relations with other men because they want too much for themselves; and this egoistic pattern of striving forces them at critical points to run from their problems or to choose the morally inferior alternative. Invariably they are men of superior gifts who ultimately find themselves driven outside the community of men by the compulsion of their own fixed ego symbols. Heyst in *Victory* forfeited everything to his desire to remain skeptical, disinterested, and aloof from the affairs of men; Jim desired—with romantic ineffectiveness—to be a great hero; Nostromo wanted extravagant outward success; Falk hungered frenziedly for the appeasement of his abnormal physical cravings; Kurtz fell from grace through his inordinate need to be a god among men, even, as it happened, if those men belonged (in Conrad's eyes) to an inferior race; Razumov shirked facing social realities in order to realize his purely personal ambitions; and Brierly, who thought too much of himself, in his own man Jones's opinion, craved personal and professional perfection to compensate a suppressed personal insecurity.

The other types fit even more clearly into Conrad's ethical scheme. The practical-unimaginative characters possess, above all, the virtue of simple courage. And, in addition, they are all moved by a deep and unquestioning sense of obligation to other men. The French lieutenant in *Lord Jim* can understand temptation and the weakening of courage—"But the honour—the honour, monsieur!

... that is real—that is!" To his mind, and to others of his type, the imaginative terrors and the subtle inner symbols of men like Jim are "too fine . . . much above me." It is this imaginative faculty, which the ideal, balanced characters like Marlow possess in common with Jim and his kind, that the lieutenant, Captain MacWhirr, Captain Whalley, and the others of their type lack. By virtue of this limitation they are more dependable than the others, even if they lack the aspiring vision to scale heights; and because of their reliability they furnish the binding cement of society.

Characters of the fourth type, Conrad's gallery of basely realistic, self-seeking rogues, are lacking in all the virtues. They have only a kind of foolhardy bravado dimly related to courage but hardly worthy of that name. They defiantly deny all obligations to humanity and they are unacquainted with illusions or ideals. In his treatment of these villains Conrad shows most clearly his shortcomings as a writer of psychological fiction. Despite his obvious attempt to be objective he fails to convince the reader that his bad men are real men making the only attempt they can make to fortify their egos in a difficult world.

Many characters in the novels and shorter stories will not fit easily into the classification that I have sketched. Martin Decoud in *Nostramo*, for instance, possesses the qualities of both the balanced and the egocentric compulsive types, but seems to be a thin mixture of the two. De Barral, the self-deluded embezzler in *Chance*, is a weakly egoistic type ridden down by his own financial megalomania and by chance circumstances; and at the same time he seems to belong to Conrad's villain type. James Wait, in *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, belongs clearly to none of the types but seems rather to stand as a symbol of the ethical demand that human beings in distress exert upon others. Conrad's women, too, with a few such exceptions as the perfectly balanced Emilia Gould in *Nostramo*, the passionate and courageous Mrs. Travers in *The Rescue*, the opportunistic governess and the sensible Mrs. Fyne in *Chance*, and the romantic Lena in *Victory*, seem to be lumped together in Conrad's conception as delightfully mysterious² on-shore creatures who are

² In his portrayal of Dona Rita in *The Arrow of Gold* Conrad seems to symbolize the distracting mystery of woman and to emphasize her power over the romantic imagi-

not to be taken seriously in considering the grim affairs of men or who draw men away disastrously from their manifest duties. That is, they are either delightful, or such wrinkled scolds as Mrs. Almay and Mrs. Viola.

His grouping of characters into ethical types led Conrad to a weak and unrealistic psychology. One has only to consider the difference between his Razumov and Dostoevski's Raskolnikov to become aware of his oversimplification. Both characters are faced with the necessity of bringing their hidden sins to light in order to make existence tolerable. The difference is that Razumov never really changes, not even when he brings himself to confess, and he comes to terms with life only when he is placed beyond the possibility of action; Raskolnikov, on the other hand, goes through a development so subtle and so convincing that not even Dostoevski's dream of his complete redemption seems fantastic. Conrad's characters are what E. M. Forster calls "flat" characters—characters who do not develop beyond the limitations of their peculiar patterns. As Stein implies, only death "can us from being ourselves cure!" For Conrad to allow men of one type to develop and merge with men of another type would be to obscure the clarity of his ethical hierarchy. And because Conrad saw life primarily in ethical terms this was for him impossible.

This limitation led him into many unconvincing characterizations. Kurtz's interesting degeneration, for instance, was fascinating material for analysis, but Conrad understood his character only superficially, and drew from his case only a moral lesson. Nostromo's speculation was contrary to every action that preceded it, and was contrived by Conrad for the purely ethical purpose of showing how the silver of the mine ultimately corrupted everyone who handled it. Brierly, whose suicide is psychologically unconvincing, seems to have been introduced only as an ethical parallel to Jim. The jet-black bad men are usually motivated by simple cupidity, but often—as with Heemskirk in "Freya of the Seven Isles"—they are obsessed

nation of the maturing young man. Ulysses, in the same novel, resembles many other young men in Conrad who possess altogether too much of the "strength of illusions" but who give promise of crossing the shadow line between youth and maturity.

by a motiveless malignity. And it may be that Conrad's women seem extraneous because they have no real place in his ethical scheme. To think what Conrad would have done with a character like Philip Carey makes one queasy.

To readers of the present generation, who demand realistic psychology above everything else, and who are relativistic if not nihilistic in their ethical thinking, Conrad naturally appears unconvincing if not tedious. If, however, these readers would accept the fact that Conrad is a subjective novelist who uses men as symbols of a simple ethical faith, they might cease demanding from him the psychological subtlety that they find in Dostoevski and Proust. Conrad's stories, in addition to their stylistic iridescence, furnish a faithful record of those lost days when the security of British imperialism made a simple and solid view of life possible; and to be judged properly his work should be considered in that historical frame.

READING MODERN POETRY

WALTER GIERASCH¹

I

Raising the hands in prayer or in surrender is a gesture common among readers of modern poetry. The surrender is not that "willing suspension of disbelief" for which Coleridge pled a century ago; and the gesture is more often a prayer for ease than a movement of worship or supplication. It has been said, I forget by whom, that poetry today is more admired than read, more discussed than understood. The gesture of resignation or incompetence, joins many readers in a bond of sympathy for which there is a partial, if not a wholly adequate, reason.

Max Eastman has written against the extremes of obscurity and fantasticality of contemporary verse. But Eastman has dealt with the extremes only, not with the poetry of apparent order and form or the poetry with obvious intent to say something, which offers the

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reader several interesting but not insoluble problems. One view of these problems the English critic Leavis suggests by quoting a passage from Lockhart—a passage which it is well to remember from time to time.

What we cannot understand, it is very common, and indeed a very natural thing, for us to undervalue; and it may be suspected that some of the merriest witticisms which have been uttered against Mr Wordsworth, have had their origin in the pettishness and dissatisfaction of minds, unaccustomed and unwilling to make, either to others or to themselves, any confession of incapacity.²

This is strong language and suggests that the defenders of the faith as well as the attackers may perhaps protest too much. The grain of truth is, however, worth preserving, even in these strong terms. An equally pertinent warning to ultraconservatism is contained in John Erskine's words about music.

Music is very much alive, and in many directions it is developing rapidly. The listener who objects to what he calls modern music is in most cases far behind the times. His modern music is perhaps already established in the tradition. Yet some novelties and experiments prove failures; they needn't be rejected in advance without a hearing, but if they don't justify themselves, they should be discarded.³

It may be said for the poets as well as for the composers that all they ask of us is a fair hearing; and a fair hearing should include, certainly, an approach not biased any more than is humanly necessary by the binding nature of training—training in reading "traditional" sentiments, in seeing poetry make on the printed page certain expected patterns, in expecting from the professed writer of verse an exercise in well-used and long-known technical devices such as metrical pattern, rhyme, and grammatical structure. Habit opposes change, but habit also, as the poet knows, prepares the way for the stimulating effect of change. The reader's awareness of the difficulties will do much toward eliminating them. And it is well, at the same time, for the reader to be aware that the difficulties of twentieth-century poetry are the difficulties of all poetry—of condensation, of metaphorical speaking, of artificial form, and of structure. A readjustment on the reader's part to the new uses of these

² F. R. Leavis, *New Bearings in English Poetry* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1932).

³ In a review of Deems Taylor's *The Well-tempered Listener* ("Books," *New York Herald-Tribune*, February 4, 1940).

old devices is of primary importance if he is to partake of modern poetry.

Wordsworth has long been responsible for a way of reading and writing poetry which has been in favor since the Romantic rebellion in the early 1800's.

I have said that poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility; the emotion is contemplated till, by a species of re-action, the tranquility gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind.

The end of poetry is to produce excitement in co-existence with an overbalance of pleasure. . . .⁴

If we add Arnold's criterion of seeing life steadily and seeing it whole we have almost a complete picture of what poetry attempted to be in the nineteenth century and what many readers and some writers still expect it to be. Readers of modern poetry find, however, a good deal more tranquillity than emotion and often a very questionable amount of pleasure even of an aesthetic nature. If we compare the poets of the last century with the poets of this, one fact comes out fairly strongly: that the poets of the 1800's are for the most part men who live the life of the "traditional" poet, hampered by the circumstances of existence, it is true, but seldom bound to a particular environment; while the poets of the 1900's have been men of academic or political experience. Of the former it is only necessary to mention Wordsworth, Keats, Shelley, Byron, Browning, Tennyson, Rossetti, and Swinburne; of the latter, Yeats, Ransom, Warren, Davidson, Tate, Auden, Lewis, MacLeish, and even Frost. Despite the danger of generalizations, there appears more than an element of truth in the contrast of the two groups. It seems reasonable to suppose that this difference of environment would influence poetic activity variously. And we do get, in the twentieth century, a remarkably "conscious" poetry as opposed to what may be loosely termed the "inspirational" poetry of the last century. Where we know the work of revision, we may contrast that of Keats for richness and melody with that of Tate for depth and nuance—a revision now more for thought than for emotion. And this growing

⁴ William Wordsworth, Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1800).

intellectualism results, at least in part, from the attacks on word meanings which have been undertaken in the study of semantics. There is no longer the same freedom with and belief in words which characterizes the poetry of the last century or longer ago. Even Shakespeare's one hundred and sixteenth sonnet ("Let me not to the marriage of true minds"), seen with the new distrust of words, becomes a poem of questionable worth. Had Shakespeare had Ransom or Tate to guide him, he might have written a different if not a better poem. Ransom says:

It is the experienced artist who attributes sanctity to some detail of his inspiration. . . . But the competent artist is as sure of his second thoughts as of his first ones. In fact, surer, if anything; second thoughts tend to be richer, for in order to get them he has to break up the obvious trains of association and explore more widely.⁵

This is not a new thought, and poets of the nineteenth century were aware of the value of revising their "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings." But Ransom expresses for his generation the distrust of feeling and of overflow and their characteristic trust in "second thoughts." Along with this goes the distrust of any bald statement, so that we find modern poets like Yeats, Eliot, Hart Crane, Horace Gregory, and W. H. Auden approaching their material obliquely rather than directly. The hearty and direct attack of Browning or the "poetic" sensitivity of Tennyson will no longer satisfy the writer of poetry. Poetry today becomes in many instances an esoteric art dependent for fullest understanding not alone on the reading of the poem but on the reading also of Yeats's "A Vision," of Eliot's "Essays," and footnotes to his poems or on the exegesis by the particular poet of his own particular poem. Under such a demand the reader quails. "What has become of poetry," he asks, "when I am not given a fair chance to read it by itself?" On the other side, Eliot assures us that a poem may be enjoyed without being understood; Yeats writes on more than one level of meaning for the initiated and the uninitiated, as in "Sailing to Byzantium"; and other poets are cramped by the pure laziness of readers who will not take enough trouble to try to understand what the poems say.

⁵ John Crowe Ransom, *The World's Body* (New York: Scribner's, 1938).

II

As always, the poet's purpose today is to define his relation to life or to express his view of it. Frequently, a reader forgets that life no longer allows such direct observation and conclusion as it did in the not-so-distant past. Political contracts become convenient evasions, relativity and the quantum theory give us no purchase for the lever that is to move the world, impulses rather than character and training guide personal conduct, machines help and harm in the same motion. Thus have politics, physics, psychology, and mechanical invention, not to mention social theory, upset the bases on which poets as well as readers used to stand. In a complex and standard-shattered age, seeing life steadily and seeing it whole imply seeing an inexplicable confusion. Like the doctor in modern life, the poet becomes a specialist, for he can no longer cope with the whole problem. And as he specializes, he attracts other specialists and writes for them as they write for him. It is his only hope of being understood at all. And in his search for something tangible, something sensuously real, he deals with the details of civilization that come immediately within his range of view. He is no longer concerned with the ultimate purposes except as they relate to what he knows personally—a relatively small part of existence—and he is often content to let the ultimates go in favor of the immediate. He may be a symbolist, an agrarian, a socialist, a humanist, or a subjectivist; but he is not all at once. Life as a whole has necessarily eluded his grasp. There are no Homers, no Dantes, no Chaucers. There is no world of Homer, of Dante, of Chaucer. He must seek stability of some sort; and he seeks it, humanly enough, in something he can observe or handle or think about and say, "This is my view of the matter."

In so far as poets do this, they are doing what they have always done—defining their relation to life. Most interesting and most perplexing to the reader of modern poetry is the consequent disappearance of expressions of satisfying personal love, of unselfish friendship, of the fireside home, and the other shibboleths—as Bernard Shaw has long been calling them—of the age of individualism. Here again the power of definition exercises control, and words change.

Love becomes as much intellectual as emotional—after the manner of Marvell and Donne; friendship becomes communal and not individual; hope is a stopping-place, not a resting-place; and sex threatens as an uncontrollable and unpredictable force, not a game. Many poets see in these changes not a decay but a freshening of life. Still, the reorienting process is necessary for the reader as well as for the writer. Since the writer orients himself by choice in a restricted environment, physical and mental, as protection against the disruptive forces of a larger locale, the reader must learn to enter that same environment. Most poets are not locking the gate in the reader's face but are actually, as always, offering an invitation to the reader to follow. The poem is the invitation.

If words have become fearful weapons, they are, at least, still employed by poets. Some writers distort meanings in the subversive manner of the worst propagandist, as does Stephen Spender in the last stanza of "The Funeral"; but for the most part poets of today are more careful of words than were the poets of fifty years ago, say. And they depend more on the everyday sound and meaning of words for the music of poetry. The tempo of speech has entered poetry since 1910 to such an extent that some readers are hard put to it to find the poetry. Of most importance in the harmonizing of everyday language for the uses of poetry is cadence—a device as old as the poetry of the Bible. It is partly the poet's control of cadence that gives to the natural, almost colloquial, flow of phrases that evidence of restraint which is essential to poetic expression. Another traditional device is the use of euphonic tricks—such as alliteration, assonance, and consonance—to bring to poetry a music that is rich in the chords and dissonances of modern music. Auden is perhaps the master of these effects, when he does not strain too obviously for them as he does in some of his more careless work. Still traditional is the refrain, but today its work is frequently done by echo lines, echo phrases, or echo words. Of the last type an example is Eliot's "Gerontion," where the words "old man," "house," and "wind" are essential both to the sense and to the music of the poem. The satisfactions of rhyme, of stanza structure, and of logical progress are not as evident in modern poetry, although by some poets they are much used. To many writers, however, they are the

too obvious devices of an older generation. In their stead the poet of today depends on his control of a free and colloquial medium, and in the best poetry the control is evident to him who runs. Even in such extreme cases as Eliot's logic of association, where one image is suggested by another as if subconsciously, instead of the logic of sequence, where one image or idea follows obviously from its predecessor as if consciously, the poetic control is felt. And Eliot has a host of imitators. In the new logic the element of shock is of the utmost importance in focusing attention on the effect desired. It may be the shock of juxtaposing what appear superficially to be discordant images, it may be the shock of an old word in a new context, it may be the shock of the sudden perception of meaning. Not all these are new, of course; but such uses of shock are vital to contemporary poetry, to its music and to its expression of feelings or ideas.

Perhaps most bothersome of all to the reader are the demands made on his knowledge. He is expected to follow quickly where the poet leads, through no matter what fields of learning and by no matter what abstruse allusions. Further, he is expected to realize the value of paradox, of irony, of understatement and to see that they frequently say more than the out-and-out assertion. He is expected to value the control of sentiment, and he is expected to realize that a poet may employ sentimentality as an ironic weapon. Like the poet, he too must be aware of psychology and of the poet's consequent distrust of his own impulses and his trust in his skepticism. These are large demands. They demand, however, no greater adjustment than the new techniques in the other arts, particularly in music, painting, and sculpture but also in architecture. It is to be hoped that the intelligent reader will see that their virtue resides, not in their newness, but in their fitness for the world in which they play a part.

III

When a poet opens a lyric as follows, we find our attention drawn at once to features that deserve more than passing consciousness.

Sunday shuts down on this twentieth-century evening.
The L passes. Twilight and bulb define

the brown room, the overstuffed plum sofa,
 the boy, and the girl's thin hands above his head.
 A neighbor's radio sings stocks, news, serenade.⁶

Certain obvious details differentiate the approach to sunset from that of premetropolitan civilization: the "L," the electricity, the radio, and the fact that youth, not maturity only, passes its life in the city. But more important for the effectiveness of the stanza are the facts that Sunday "shuts down" like a factory, that twilight and Edison have an equal share in letting city-dwellers know of evening's arrival, and that the radio impartially sings and owners as impartially hear, or don't hear, the variety of noises coming from the loud-speaker. Here, too, the freedom of everyday speech is controlled in the five-beat line, and melody is suggested by the restraint and by the use of slant rhyme in the last two lines. The demands on the reader are not extreme, but he must at least give the poet his attention. A greater effort is demanded by the following, the opening stanza from another poem:

Under the stone I saw them flow,
 express Times Square at five o'clock
 eyes set in darkness, trampling down
 all under, limbs and bodies driven
 in crowds, crowds over crowds, the street
 exit in starlight and dark air
 to empty rooms, to empty arms,
 wall paper gardens flowering there,
 error and loss upon the walls.⁷

We are in the same world, nearly the same time of day, as in the first instance. But the mood is obviously different, as the different tempo at once informs us. Still in the metropolis, we are given our main guide to the situation in the second line, and from that the poet expects us to evolve the meaning of the rest of the stanza. We recognize easily the subway rush hour; but the poet is giving us, naturally, not merely a picture but an interpretation as well. "Under the stone" may suggest not only the cavity of the underground but

⁶ Muriel Rukeyser, "Boy with His Hair Cut Short," from *U.S. 1* (New York: Covici-Friede, 1938).

⁷ Horace Gregory, "VI," from *Chorus for Survival* (New York: Covici-Friede, 1935).

also a tombstone, for these hurrying crowds might as well be dead as live the existence which keeps them rushing nowhere at top speed. Their eyes are set as if on a goal or as if in unconsciousness or death, and the "darkness" says there is no goal to be seen. These mobs trample "all under" without distinction or thought, in "crowds over crowds" in the habit of mobs but also in the obvious circumstances of street crowds over the crowds below the earth or on the two levels of the subway. There is a suggestion of relief and a more romantic respite in the "starlight and dark air": they should meet these at the end of the journey, but by the device of shock the poet draws our attention forcibly to the emptiness even of relief. Not reality but artificiality is the goal, poor substitutes—"error and loss"—for the reality. It is worth adding that the despair of this fatuity itself suggests a remedy for a more meaningful existence by substituting consciousness for unconsciousness and the reality for the imitation.

At the risk of being tedious, let us look at one more example of the method of modern poetry; and we will take a poem written in the freest poetic style of today.

You recommend that the motive, in Installment 8, should be changed from ambition to a desire, on the heroine's part, for doing good; yes, that can be done.

Installment 9 could be more optimistic, as you point out, and it will not be hard to add a heartbreak to the class reunion in Installment 10.

The script for 11 may have, as you say, too much political intrigue of the sordid type; perhaps a diamond-in-the-rough approach would take care of this. And 12 has a reference to war that, as you suggest, had better be removed; yes.

This brings us to the holidays that coincide with our prison sequence. With the convicts' Christmas supper, if you approve, we can go to town.

Yes, this should not be difficult. It can be done. Why not?

And script 600 brings us to the millennium, with all the fiends of hell singing Bach chorales

And in 601 we explore the Valleys of the Moon (why not?), finding in each of them fresh Fountains of Youth.

And there is no mortal ill that cannot be cured by a little money, or lots of love, or by a friendly smile; no.

And human hopes have never gone unrealized; no.
And the rain does not ever, anywhere, fall upon corroded monuments
and the neglected graves of the dead.⁸

As the writer speaks to the editor, we realize how he would have written to suit his own view of life had not the editor demanded hackneyed changes that would suit the consumers. The changes are suggested by the editor, and it is obvious that the story is fast losing its character for something forced and false. The "heart-break" is not only the tearjerker of literary pap but the revision that breaks the heart of the story and brings it to an untimely death. But troublesome thoughts must be removed if the story is to satisfy, and the author finds he can "go to town" in the editor's sense by relinquishing his plan to "go to town" in his own sense. On and on he can go with editorial policy guiding him until 600 seems as good as a millennium and the cold and dead valleys of the moon the proper source of fountains of youth. The despair is suggested openly in the changes from "yes" to "why not" to "no." And the climactic structure of the poem emphasizes the growing mood of resignation—from what seems plausible in the first stanza to what seems fantastic and far fetched in the middle to what is patently impossible in the last. There is an organization and control which are essentially poetic, although the page pattern and the speech quality suggest anything but conscious guidance on the writer's part. Perhaps most interesting of all is the poet's appeal in the last stanza to stock responses in the reader which have long played their part in working up superficial emotion. Here the poet puts the "tearjerkers" to work, not in the usual manner of meaning nothing more than meets the eye but with such exaggeration that the appeal is ironic and the use of the device is obviously saved from being maudlin. They are put to work in the pattern of the whole poem.

IV

There is, it must be recognized, no panacea for ease in reading modern poetry. The reader must always, sometimes even more than

⁸ Kenneth Fearing, "Yes, the Serial Will Be Continued" (*New Yorker*, December 2, 1939).

usual, exert himself, get himself out of the lazy habit of reading poetry only for surface melody, for surface meanings, for "traditional" effects, if he is to read poetry today. He must, first of all, define the subject matter of the poem before him; and to do this means, of course, to understand the meanings of words and the allusions and common knowledge that the poet takes for granted. In the second place, the reader must try to define the poet's point of view toward the subject matter of the poem. This is usually most clearly brought out through the relations and order of the parts of the poem and by the tone of voice—ironic, sympathetic, hearty, incredulous, assertive, etc.—which the poet employs. In the third place, the reader should define the method of presentation, the form and structure of the poem, if he is to read for the music as well as the matter. Finally, it must be remembered that no principles will work equally with all poems, of today or of yesterday.

Normally the philosophy of one age is the literature of the next: the ideas and issues that in one generation are fought out on the field of research and speculation provide in the succeeding generation the background of drama, fiction, and poetry. But in Greece, the literature did not lag behind the philosophy; the poets were themselves philosophers, did their own thinking, and were in the intellectual vanguard of their time.⁹

Will Durant might write in practically the same terms of modern poets. And it is our lack of adjustment to the "ideas and issues" of our own generation which, as much as anything else, puzzles us as readers when we come to poetry. The poets have something to say in a contemporary manner, and they are dealing with contemporary ideas. More than ever in the history of poetry in English are poets abreast of the world around them. Their consciousness of their world demands of the reader an equal consciousness. And the Muse is less and less a goddess of escape, more and more a goddess of attack.

⁹ Will Durant, *The Life of Greece* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1939).

THE NOVEL AS AN EDUCATIVE FORCE¹

HARLAN HATCHER²

A shrewd southern scholar of my acquaintance once called the American Civil War a struggle between Harriet Beecher Stowe and Sir Walter Scott. That is one way of saying that literature is a powerful force in the modern world. I have cause to know how potent it can be. In a class that paid some attention to Alfred Lord Tennyson, a great poet in his moments, I one day let myself go on the Lotos-Eaters and their isle as the happiest state for poor mortals in a confused world. Why should we only toil, the roof and crown of things? One of the good students in the class disappeared the following day. A week or so later I had a post card picturing the palm trees, the curving shore line, and the tropical breakers of Florida, with a note saying he was off to the Lotos islands. He got a boat to the Isle of Pines, only to find there a transcontinental airport and freighters loading guano—no lotus blossoms. He went to Cuba just in time to hide for three days while the revolution raged. He now lives on a farm overlooking the beautiful Ohio. And when I am called upon to talk of Tennyson I concentrate on Ulysses. Literature is, indeed, explosive and dangerous.

Both in numbers and in force, fiction takes first place among literary forms in our own day. Each year more than a thousand new novels are published. A few hit the best-seller lists and stampede the timid and unadventurous public to the loan libraries of the big department stores. Most of them sell their modest two thousand copies. But their combined power is great, and in our country where drama is unavailable to most and expensive even to the few, and where poetry is again temporarily dead, these novels are the sole literary sustenance of the top-heavy majority of literate citizens.

By and large, the novel has been the preferred form of expression

¹ A paper read at a general session of the National Council of Teachers of English in New York, November, 1939.

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during the past century. We have only to recall the names of Dickens, Thackeray, Trollope, Brontë, Eliot, Meredith, Hardy, James, Twain, Howells, Dreiser, Conrad, Bennett, Galsworthy, Mann, Huxley, Woolf, Maugham, Balzac, Flaubert, Zola, Joyce, Proust, Dostoevski, Tolstoy, Turgenev—names set down at random recall—to remind ourselves that great writers of the past century have transmuted their view of life in the form of fiction. Few aspects of living have escaped their genius. Their novels are the textbooks of modern times.

There is no more eloquent and authoritative testimony on this point than the words of the late President Masaryk, of the late Republic of Czechoslovakia, one of the constructive statesmen of this age and a man of great practical wisdom. An American scholar who was received by him in Prague in the library of the Hradcany, the proud ancient castle of Roman emperors and Bohemian kings, then the presidential residence, said:

Masaryk pointed to the side of the room lined with books on philosophy, and said: "When I was young and stupid I read these books to find out truth, but now I read novels which more exactly interpret the real things, the struggle of man for reality." One of his students tells me that in a course of Practical Philosophy they used for textbook Dostoevsky's *Brothers Karamazov*.

The contrast is startling between those words of a busy, hard-headed man of affairs, and the fixed belief of our grandfathers that novel-reading was not only a waste of time but was sinful before the Lord, and all novelists except Dickens and Scott were agents of Lucifer. Fiction must be reckoned with as an educative force.

A novelist derives his force from his genius for creating in his pages men and women who give us the illusion of living persons who act in the pattern of plot what they are in character. That is to say, a novelist has two functions to perform, and only two. The first is to tell us through the medium of created character how it feels to be alive on this earth; how men and women, in whom we see ourselves, act and react in confrontation with the issues of living; how they manage in the routine of the commonplace; and how they engage themselves with the great moments of living where, but for the Grace of God, go you and I. We must know that Mrs. Dalloway is alive, and we must feel the quality of her quickness as she greets the morn-

ing and walks across St. James Park to Bond Street to buy flowers while Big Ben strikes the hour, and messengers hurry with dispatch boxes to Buckingham Palace, and airplanes spell letters in the sky. We must be identified with Raskolnikov when he murders the old pawnbroker; with Alyosha when he is transfigured and made ecstatic in the union of spirit and flesh by the touch of earth and the hand of God before the chapel where Father Zosima lies dead. And we must be made one with the love-tormented M. Swann of *Remembrance of Things Past*, "hoping to live long enough only to know the happiness of not being in love with Odette"; with Stephen Dedalus and Leopold Bloom in the alcoholic orgy in Bella Cohen's brothel of Circe in *Ulysses*; with the frustrated, property-loving Soames Forsyte wandering in the ancestral graveyard; and with Emma Bovary mixing her fatal potion, as well as with the happily adjusted, and maternally fulfilled, Antonia of Willa Cather's beautiful novel. This demand for the illusion of living people in a novel has first claim on the author's powers; if he discharges it to our satisfaction, we forgive him every fault. As one of the finest living craftsmen in fiction said:

I am well aware that the greatest novelists the world has ever known, Balzac, Dickens, Tolstoi and Dostoyevski, wrote in a very slovenly fashion. I can only conclude that if you have vitality, invention, originality and the gift for creating living persons, it does not really matter a row of pins how you write. All the same it is better to write well.

The second of the novelist's functions follows as a corollary to this. On the highest level of fiction it is inseparable from character and may not at first seem to be a separate function at all. But it is to be distinguished in the art of criticism. It is the compulsion upon the novelist to impose order and meaning upon the chaotic flux of the spectacle of life. Our moments slip by one by one without apparent form or pattern, most of them on a dead level of monotonous repetition; few and rare are those that rise to memorableness above the days and years of quiet desperation. But when an artist speaks and says let there be order, details fall into their selected place, meaning appears, and the world is a new and different place. The artist has cut away the unessential and repetitive, so characteristic of life in its relaxed jumble, and has pointed it to central and permanent issues. In that act, inescapable in the work of art, the novelist has spoken his

faith and offered his criticism of life. We then see after him, for he has given form to our formlessness; he has said what we were about to say, and we nod in recognition and approval. It is this quality of truth-saying that gives to literature its transitory immortality. It is this process of hewing a "great lump out of the earth and [putting] it under a glass case, with all its inhabitants going about their daily business, and not suspecting that they were being made a show of" that makes fiction the powerful criticism of life that it is. And when a novelist has created for us the illusion of living men and women over a narrative framework stripped of everything unessential to his vision, he has performed the last miracle in the thaumaturgic art of letters.

No single literary form has spoken so much truth with such telling force as modern fiction. "How few materials," wrote Emerson, "are yet used by our arts! The mass of creatures and of qualities are still hid and expectant." Those words were said a long time ago, and though still true, they are less exact than when Emerson spoke them, for he died in the youth of *St. Elmo*, *Ben Hur*, and *Ten Nights in a Bar Room*. Since that day modern fiction, and especially American fiction, has given form and meaning to many of the hidden and expectant creatures of this earth. Yet the form and meaning it has created for them are not wholly satisfactory, and I am sure that Emerson would find them abominable. Why?

The fact is that novelists, under the pressure of our sick modern view of life, have altered their views on the reason for their work. Take Trollope as an example of the writer of fiction in the great day of Victorian certitude when Emerson's voice still thrilled the land. Trollope was so absolutely certain of his purpose that he could say of his own work:

.... I have ever thought of myself as a preacher of sermons, and my pulpit as one which I could make both salutary and agreeable to my audience. I do believe that no girl has risen from the reading of my pages less modest than she was before, and that some may have learned from them that modesty is a charm well worth preserving. I think that no youth has been taught that in falseness and flashiness is to be found the road to manliness; but some may perhaps have learned from me that it is to be found in truth and a high but gentle spirit. Such are the lessons I have striven to teach; and I have thought it might be done by representing to my readers characters like themselves,—or to which they might liken themselves.

Those are words in the high tradition of a Victorian gentleman who knew that his novels were a force making for righteousness.

Can you imagine any of the moderns saying after him the words of his creed? No. But you can see John Dos Passos rising to ask how Mary French is to preserve the charm of modesty in her wretched home. You can hear Theodore Dreiser asking the same question for Sister Carrie and Jennie Gerhardt; Dostoevski asking and answering for his saintly prostitute Sonia in the unforgettable Bible reading scene which ends with the simple words, "The dying piece of candle dimly lit up this low-ceilinged room, in which an assassin and a harlot had just read the Book of Books." And we can see Gustave Flaubert pointing to Emma as an oblique example of one of Trollope's modest girls being partially prepared for her fate by feeding her mind with romantic fiction. *Paul and Virginia* and too much Walter Scott, according to Flaubert, damaged her dreamy personality and sent her on the quest for romantic satisfactions that led to the blue jar full of white powder and one of the horrible deaths in literature.

The later novelists have thought that adult knowledge of the facts of life is better than the modesty, however, charming of an ignorant maid, and makes for a safer world. You may toss your coin between Hetty Sorrel and Lady Brett. We have with the years grown less and less concerned with Trollope's ideal and more with the importance of exciting interest in the urgent issues of contemporary living in all their unromantic ugliness. Good men who were upset with fear that their daughters might read a demoralizing shocker called *Wuthering Heights* have great-granddaughters of tender age in high school who are reading *The Grapes of Wrath* and granddaughters who see no reason—and no method—for preventing them from viewing vicariously this raw slice of life.

The novelist's creed, then, in the last fifty years or so has been on the whole to show life as it is without indulging predilections for nice people and manly young men. You may not write directly about the forms of life and the traits of character you wish to prevail, but you must creep up on them stealthily by picturing their opposite. You may not think of yourself as a preacher of sermons but as the health officer of an infected community posting bills of quarantine. You say to your reader: Here are the facts of life without rearrangement—which always means the facts which the novelist thinks central, ar-

ranged to show the pattern which he has found dominant. Following this ideal, the novelists have filled Masaryk's shelves with a startling report on how men live and what they do and how they feel as they make their little journey on the earth, struggling for reality.

At this point precisely is raised one of the tough problems for us who must deal as responsible teachers with fiction as an educative force—especially with the fiction of the last half-century. (And it must of course be remembered that these novels have been read and that thousands more will be read whether or not we have a hand in the process.) Our fiction is an extraordinarily accurate reflection of the ideas, the hopes, the despair, especially of the meagerness and shortcomings of life as lived by most of the two thousand millions of us now alive. But it has been created in times of great stress, under the impact of urgent reforms, under the controlling rein of new and revolutionary interpretations of life and human destiny, and startling theories of the nature of personality, with all the little demons peculiar to our times looking over the shoulder of the author, regardless of his genius, and directing his pen. We have been unavoidably caught up in movements and made partial by them. It has been, on the whole, a period of dispersion, a time sadly out of joint. A few fortunate ages seem to find men's spirit, men's hopes, and their creative energies all caught up in the same rhythm and used toward a common objective with little waste or frustration. In those golden ages men, drawing upon the genius of their times, became greater than themselves. In times of confusion and disharmony, like our own, man's single power is not implemented by a larger and all-embracing purpose, as when Moses or David draw upon the myths of their age, but is drained in confusion and opposition and defeated by its own futility. Life has seemed to many of our most articulate minds to go on without dignity and without compensation in a world so wrongheaded, if not diabolic, that it makes us sick to think about it. Hector was counseled by the golden Apollo himself, but what god among the Pantheon regards with concern a mortgage foreclosure against the Joads of the Dust Bowl?

Our better fiction I think has tried seriously to hold its mirror up to nature, but the mirror has the malformations natural to its age and returns its own exaggerations in the image. The characters por-

trayed and the pattern of their action have been necessarily distorted by the preoccupations of our times. What these have been are known to all of you, and I shall not feel under obligation to expand upon them or to argue about them here and now. But a few of the most dominant have been (1) the passion for the neglected and unlovely details about men and their ways: the realistic report on the houses they live in, the food they eat, the wages they get, the love they make, the joy they lack, and the curses they give the whole routine; (2) the fear that evil is an active self-perpetuating principle, stronger than good, and that we do not move naturally from the better toward the best, but are usually only a step ahead of disaster, and at any moment our foot may stumble; (3) the analysis of personality and human motives under the mode of Freudian psychology; (4) the spirit of revolt, the break with tradition, and the resulting attitudes of satire and depreciation; and (5) the fear of industrialism and totalitarianism and their threat against our security and our most elementary satisfactions.

These are at least the primary distortions when viewed with detachment in the perspective of time. Along with them, however, we have received a documented report on the wreckage left in the wake of our onrushing or backsliding civilization. The long battle for the privilege on both sides of the Atlantic of transmuting any and all aspects of life into the literary form of fiction, and of using for that purpose any words from the common store of speech is, the writer thinks, temporarily over and won. From the point of view of Masaryk we have an unrivaled collection of socially useful novels. So we come back again to our initial concern with this fiction as an educative force.

In some categories its importance is starkly self-evident. I am sure that the reluctance of the nations to plunge unreservedly into war is in part owing to the effective work of the novelists of all countries who have made the world behind the lines conscious of the exact nature of modern war. They have shown its deceit, its wreckage, its cost in human suffering, its boredom, and its unspeakable horrors. The romance of Sir Walter is no more. In its place stand *Three Soldiers*, *Death of a Hero*, *The Case of Sergeant Grischa*, *Education before Verdun*, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, *Man's Fate*, and *Johnny Got*

His Gun. The commentary is saddening, but it is well to know through the experiences of one terrified and lonely young man what kind of a pass we have come to and what human sacrifice lies behind the impersonal announcement: "Light activity on Hill 14." We understand why our English contemporaries say with tragic hearts that no time will ever be theirs to meditate upon life and to give artistic expression to their world; that they must throw a few words together with what force they can command while they listen for the siren and watch for the wreckage of bombs. Under such conditions Trollope's purpose belongs to a world as remote as a fairy tale. Under such conditions, too, the novel has tended to slip from the delicately articulated art form practiced by Henry James to the definition suggested by Richard Aldington, "to me the excuse for the novel is that one can do any damn thing one pleases."

Fiction has struck powerfully, too, through its revelation in terms of quickening sympathy and imagination of the poverty and cruelty in our land of abundance, of the wretched nightmares that accompany the American dream. *The Grapes of Wrath* has passed three hundred thousand copies and *Christ in Concrete* is doing very well. They are successors to the Studs Lonigan trilogy and *An American Tragedy*. I need not elaborate or multiply examples on this point. More power to it! If this fiction can do even a little to soften men's stony hearts, to make us see and feel the experiences of other men in a ruthless time, to break down the appalling walls that are being thrown up around little groups of peoples in the name of nationalism to separate them from the rest of the world and to teach them hatred and ignorance and prejudice of all others; if it can help to keep emotionally alive through their common character and action, their common hopes and sufferings, the essential unity and brotherhood among all peoples—and I think it does and will—it is a priceless force in the world. For all great fiction has made evident the singleness and not the separateness of life, and, in one way or another, while maintaining its poise before the inevitable residue of suffering, "the lonely suffering imposed upon mankind by life and death" has cried out against the unnecessary suffering which, in the words of the late Ernest Toller, "arises out of the unreason of humanity, out of an in-

adequate social System," and is therefore unnecessary and can be vanquished.

This strong social and humanitarian theme is dominant in contemporary fiction. I hope I have made clear my own sympathetic approval of its purpose. But it is imperative that while our minds are being informed and our sympathies quickened our spirits shall also be nourished. In the boom days during and following the World War the excitement and optimism of life was self-sustaining. In a world where values are always going up, where abundance is assured for all, providing wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few, and where permanent prosperity is guaranteed through the neat formula of buying luxuries out of anticipated income, satire, psychoanalysis, farce, and hard-boiled adventure will flourish. But when the bubble bursts, doubt, bewilderment, and despair settle upon us, and the people cry for the support of what Carrel calls the first needs of modern men: "mental equilibrium, nervous stability, sound judgment, audacity, moral courage, and endurance."

I doubt if there is any agency better suited for ministering to these needs than a well-selected shelf of fiction. My own experience in observing the reading not only of college students but of men and women in scores of towns and villages of America is given assurance by the experiments and reports of our more scientific colleagues. The psychopathologists have gone deep into this field. Kempf recognized the educative force of fiction and prepared a list of books with what he called "emotional release" for various types of patients. Philip Carey in Somerset Maugham's *Of Human Bondage* probably has more effect on college students through his convincing humanity and his struggle to find himself in his world than a course in history, economics, Renaissance poetry, and vocational guidance all combined. The "emotional release" in *Son's and Lovers*, *Crime and Punishment*, *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, is a tremendous experience for those whose dark room is lit up by them. And *The Brothers Karamazov* has suggested depths and forms of human experience not even suspected by many readers.

Prominent on this shelf are the novels of Joseph Conrad. Conrad has left out most of the things our social novelists would put in, and

he has suffered censure for his omissions: he makes no protest against the living conditions of sailors, their wages, hours, food, pay, provision for old age. These are important considerations. And yet we are reminded of the note of defeat and bewilderment voiced continuously by our liberals who have seen astounding improvements in these physical conditions of living; their despair seems to deepen as their campaign slogans for reform become realities. The reason is simple and tragic. It is the loss of what Conrad called the whole truth, which is a moral truth. Bread is primary, but not in itself sustaining. There are those universals by which man preserves his dignity and his spirit—as when one Tom Lingard, a lonely, inconspicuous sea captain, upholds some human value, mysterious and profound, in the limitless universe.

On this special shelf, too, must go some of our new historical fiction. In the backward look toward ages of greater faith than our own, the inessential is more easily stripped away, and the permanent values of life are seen in sharper differentiation. This movement toward re-examination of the past is especially significant in America where we have had so many half-forgotten epics of heroism and courageous accomplishment. Joseph Smith's building of Nauvoo, Illinois, in its malarial swamps, and Brigham Young's transformation of Great Salt Lake Valley are recent examples. And the reason for the success of *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* is obvious. The rediscovery of America is in itself a hopeful sign of the life and power in our fiction.

We shall all be obliged, no doubt, to live out our lives here amid uncertainties and discouragements and changes. We shall have to face these uncertainties without being defeated or made futile by them. We shall have to learn and relearn and teach that our inherited freedoms are soon used up, that the things men live by must be constantly re-created, or, like our soil, they erode and exhaust their fertility. In literature we must treasure the old and write the new. And speaking for our needs of this moment, in directing the educative force of fiction, we ought to keep before us the ringing words of Thoreau: "We should impart our courage, and not our despair, our health and ease, and not our disease, and take care that this does not spread by contagion."

LITERATURE AS AN INDEPENDENT SUBJECT IN
THE CURRICULUM: A REPLY TO
PROFESSOR SHELLY

WILLIAM MILES THOMAS¹

During the past few years correlation, the study of literature and history together, has become fairly well established in secondary education and is now making its way into even the graduate schools of some of our leading universities. Such a sweeping change from old ideals as this study calls forth naturally arouses much controversy; many feel that this type of study will rob literature of its independence and its aim. Such is the stand taken by Professor Shelly of the University of Pennsylvania in the May, 1939, issue of the College Edition of the *English Journal*. Mr. Shelly advances the argument that aesthetic pleasure is the only aim of literature, and, he says, correlation "would turn the study of literature into a branch of science and would make it factual or utilitarian."²

The whole argument concerning the place of literature in the curriculum turns on the nature of literature and is really a conflict of strict Aristotelianism and modified Platonism. Professor Shelly's view is quite Aristotelian, as is shown by his statement that literature is a fine art and that pleasure is the end of all fine art, hence of literature.³

Pleasure, however, is not the total end of literature, nor is a desire to give aesthetic pleasure the origin of literature. Literature is the direct result of man's activities and his sociological conditions. The period in which a literary selection is written determines, as a rule, the nature of the piece; hence, the factors affecting and molding literature must be given recognition. Literature—the result of historical

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² Percy V. D. Shelly, "English in the Curriculum," *English Journal*, May, 1939, p. 351.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 253.

conditions—never can and never should be an “independent” subject in the curriculum.

The elements of social content are outstanding in all literature. Even in the time of Aristotle, upon whose philosophy Professor Shelly bases his case, practically all literature was of a social or political nature, and the works of which “aesthetic pleasure” was the aim were merely the results of social thinking. The same is true of English literature, for one can trace the history of English literature through the political and environmental factors affecting England in its various periods. The literature of the Renaissance in England presents a strong illustration of this, and likewise the fundamental concepts of Neo-Classic and Romantic literature forcefully call this to attention. No author has written without being affected to some degree by the age in which he lived; no author has written without some kind of a social philosophy that either has been expressed in his works or has in some degree affected his writing. Is it logical, then, for literature to take its place in the curriculum, as Professor Shelly advocates, as an *independent* subject, when it is anything but independent?

The effect of history on literature is particularly manifest in American literature. Historical and sociological factors shaped the Transcendental movement, the Romantic period, the Realistic period, and the period of Naturalistic literature. The Realistic movement in American literature would have been greatly checked, if not stopped altogether, had it not been for three motivating factors—the Civil War, the new industrial system, and the frontier movement. Literature was the effect of factors far more significant than itself and can be taught only as such. American realists and naturalists wrote of what they saw, and they meant to give thought-provoking pictures of life and not bundles of “aesthetic pleasures” bound by covers. To introduce the historical and sociological factors—the real sources of literature—as “certain matters from allied subjects . . . incidentally and for the sake of background,”⁴ as Professor Shelly says every “good” teacher does, is disastrous to the study of litera-

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 350.

ture. Then, too, Professor Shelly is inclined to minimize the importance of "background," for, as Hardin Craig says,

it [background] must be something which we perceive with our minds and feel with our emotions as a living part of the literature of the past. It cannot be just detail, or even bodies of separate details attached as notes to particular passages or grouped together by community of subject. . . .⁵

Certainly something introduced "incidentally" could not live in the mind of a reader. Now, the process of making background live is definitely an aesthetic process, but this process is far different from the aesthetic teaching of today.

In all the examples he presents, Professor Shelly seems chiefly concerned with comparing the worst practices of correlation with a purely ideal plan for aesthetic teaching—a plan which, in practice, has never existed and never can exist. In contrast to this, aesthetic teaching that is practiced today has its faults, and many of them. The personification of the evils of aesthetic teaching is found in the teacher who, anxious to arouse aesthetic pleasure, announces to the class that she is going to read "a beautiful poem" and when she finishes asks: "Now, children, wasn't that beautiful?" Likewise there is the teacher who fairly throws herself into the aesthetic spirit of a piece of literature and illustrates, for example, the cauldron scene of *Macbeth* by stirring the wastebasket with a pointer and mumbling the speeches of the witches. When this type of teaching is pitted against the "evils" of even the poorest kind of correlative teaching, the contrast is quite evident. After all, only a poet is capable of appreciating the pure poetry of Spenser, and the teacher doesn't have one poet in a hundred students, while everyone can get something from a correlated curriculum. There can be no doubt that the "aesthetic" teaching of literature is responsible for an enduring distaste for all literature by many students; correlation does not have this effect.

Professor Shelly cites several authors who, he feels, would be either omitted from a correlated curriculum or would be taught improperly. If we are to consider omissions we find that there are far more literary selections that cannot be taught by aesthetic instruction

⁵ *The Enchanted Glass*, Oxford Press, 1936, p. 238.

than there are that cannot be taught by correlative teaching. Cannot Whitman, Dreiser, Lewis, Crane, Anderson, and Mark Twain be comprehended more successfully if they are presented in connection with the sociological and historical forces that gave rise to their writings? Can we teach the works of Burns, Crabbe, and Dickens merely for their "beauty" and the "aesthetic pleasure" they evoke? We certainly cannot. Professor Shelly particularly mentions Keats and Poe as men who are neglected in a correlated curriculum. This is, of course, merely another "horrible example" of the worst sort of practices in poor correlative work, and such an omission has no justification. Keats was affected by the age in which he lived, and the elements of social content in his poetry are too important to ignore. His early death prevented a full development of his social philosophy, but even so there are several expressions of his feeling toward humanity in several poems, and the attitude is in varying degrees implicit in some of the Odes. In "I Stood Tiptoe upon a Little Hill," written in 1816, he only vaguely hints of any interest in humanity, but in "Sleep and Poetry" he quite definitely commits himself to an interest in world-affairs in lines 61-85. He shows increased interest in humanity in *Endymion*, where he writes under the conviction that the soul, to succeed in its pursuit of Beauty, must be taken out of itself and purified by active sympathy with the lives and sufferings of others.

The final statement of Keats's social philosophy is made in *The Fall of Hyperion: A Dream*, written late in 1819. When the poet asks the Priestess what he shall do to be saved from death,

"None can usurp this height," return'd that shade,
"But those to whom the miseries of the world
Are misery, and will not let them rest."⁶

And so one sees, from 1816 to 1819, the growth of a great social philosophy. Aesthetic teaching would minimize the importance of the social philosophy of John Keats, but correlative teaching would give it its full value and recognize it as a significant feature of his work.

Edgar Allan Poe would hardly be ignored in a successful corre-

⁶ *Poems of John Keats* (New York: P. F. Collier & Son, 1902), p. 274, ll. 146-48.

lated curriculum, for, as a matter of fact, the study of Poe clearly illustrates the great need for correlation. When the whole of Poe's work is considered, one sees manifested in it a great and motivating interest in the science, thought, and architecture of the day. "Eureka," for example, illustrates Poe's great interest in the current physical and metaphysical sciences, as do many of his short and long tales. A comprehension of Poe's characters necessitates an understanding of the problems of aristocratic Virginia of his day with all its liberalism and conservatism running at cross-purposes, and an understanding of Yankee thought and theory, as well. Current thought, current criticism, current science, current philosophy, are vital elements in the works of Poe. Is the teacher of literature to be denied the chance to present these forces in their full significance? Correlation recognizes their value; aesthetic teaching does not.

Literature, then, is and always has been primarily the mirror of life, showing life either as it is or as it should be. Literature is not and never has been the product of independent geniuses endowed with God-given powers of omniscience and mentally divorced from the shaping effects of personal, national, and universal environmental factors, as the advocates of aesthetic teaching would have it. The question of the nature of literature and of its place in the curriculum resolves itself into a battle between two schools of thought—the one believing, as Professor Shelly indicates, that literature is more or less the product of omniscience and has as its aim aesthetic pleasure and should be taught by some ideal method which he does not make clear and the other believing that literature is, after all, only the reflection of the mind and conditions of certain ages, having as its aim the accurate picturing of life, and should be taught as such. Hardin Craig quite adequately summarizes the controversy when he says:

We shall not discuss such an elementary proposition as this, that the literature of every age must be composed, both materially and structurally, of the current ideas and accepted beliefs of that age. We must abandon to the solace of its advocates the mystical view of creative literature. Those who believe that the poet and the literary genius are independent of time, place, and social circumstance and that a God to whom present, past, and future are as one does actually and directly speak to and through poets and reveal to them ultimate truth and beauty—those holding such doctrines will see no occasion for these remarks. They must perforce be addressed to those who, holding a different opin-

ion as to the nature of genius, believe it to be the possession of ordinary powers to an extraordinary degree and admit that not even Shakespeare and Dante could know and reveal the future as fact or opinion or present those aspects of the past about which they had no information.⁷

AN EDITOR LOOKS AT FRESHMAN ENGLISH

ARNOLD MULDER¹

Freshman English has been receiving plenty of attention from the professors; there may be the interest of novelty, if nothing else, in a treatment of the subject from the point of view of a newspaper editor. It is just possible that such a person, confronted with daily immediacies in the use of the English language, can profitably glean after the educators and can bring to the threshers, if not sheaves, at least a few stray ears of wheat.

It so happens that, although I received academic training for the job of teacher, I served for quite a few years as the editor of a daily newspaper. Since then, for some years, I have had the pleasure and privilege (no irony intended) of teaching a section in Freshman English. In the latter capacity I have, of course, read innumerable articles on how it should be done, how it should not be done, how it has been done, and how it is being done—almost as many theories as there are schools or instructors. The only point on which there is some agreement is that the use of the English language by students is still open to improvement.

Instructors in other subjects than English are, of course, convinced that student English could not be worse. Here are two sentences from an article in the *English Journal* giving a detailed account of a very "advanced" system of teaching Freshman English:

In all fairness it should be said that there are those professors who complain bitterly about the inability of our upperclass students to express them-

⁷ *Op. cit.*, pp. 62-63.

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selves. And in all fairness it should be said that these complainers are the same ones who raised a hue and cry about the deficiencies in writing displayed by those former students who came through the conventional Freshman composition course.

New methods do not appear to have cured an ancient evil. (Parenthetically, may I suggest that if the results of the work of those who complain of the use of English by students could be tested, those instructors' batting averages would probably be found to be not much higher than that of the gentlemen of the English department? I have had students tell me that the American Civil War was fought in the eighteenth century and that Karl Marx was a movie comedian.)

Here, then, is the first observation that I make as an editor—a fact that the professors have strangely overlooked or at least ignored—not nearly all students who enter college for any one of a thousand reasons are teachable in the use of the English language. I suppose that after a thousand years of the most superadvanced methods in teaching Freshman English the professor of chemistry will still complain that the English department is inefficient, the professor of French will still demand that Juniors and Seniors should at least know the difference between a preposition and the stage name of a movie star, the professor of physics will still remark bitterly that even Seniors don't know that a preposition is not a proper word to end a sentence with.

The nonteachability of the English language to certain young citizens of the republic is perfectly well understood by editors of newspapers. There are, apparently, thousands of youngsters in high school who yearn to become what they somewhat importantly call "journalists." They descend on the city editor like a swarm of locusts, and when there are openings for cub reporters the editor takes on a certain number of them. It straightway becomes his duty to give those youngsters a course in Freshman English. And sad experience soon teaches him that a certain number of them are unteachable in the use of their native language, even to the modest extent demanded by newspaper readers. They may have excellent minds; they may know all the reasons for each little wheel and rod in an automobile motor, and they may understand all the gadgets on

the switchboard of an airplane; they may even know all the box scores of all the baseball games since 1881. But they cannot be taught the simple fact that a sentence must have a subject and a predicate, or what the difference between a subject and a predicate is, or that an adjective derived from a proper noun should be uppercased, or that a quotation mark may have something to do with human speech, or that "nite" is still spelled "night," or that from at least an editor's point of view "Xmas" is an abomination to the Lord, or that children are not "kiddies," or that "lousy"—picturesque and forceful though it may be—is not the one and only synonym for every derogatory adjective in the language.

Accept it as the sad but deliberate judgment of an editor that many of these things cannot be taught to a certain percentage of young gentlemen who aspire to make for themselves what they call "careers" in "journalism." The unteachable cubs are simply "flunked"—synonym for "fired"; it costs a newspaper real money to teach reporters, and appropriations do not provide for trying to teach unteachables. In the colleges the theory at least is that all can be taught; if any given student does not acquire proficiency in the use of the English language, his native limitations are not to blame but the quality of the instruction. True, some are weeded out, but there are many, many students who show such brilliancy and promise in mathematics or history or chemistry or biology that instructors in English are compelled to look the other way a little bit. The curriculum throws them all into the hopper, and even college teachers must be practical.

Strangely, we recognize the unteachability of certain persons in nearly all other subjects. When a student is poor in music, it is merely a delightful joke—he is not forced to take a year of elementary music on the theory that music is an indispensable means of self-expression. Economics cannot be taught to some persons (myself included); the mental or temperamental limitation is not held to subject the victim to intellectual disgrace—he consoles himself with the thought that he "is like that," and he does the things he can do. Only in the subject of English does unteachability carry an educational stigma. As an editor I tell myself as a teacher of Freshman English that the time will never come when educators in other de-

partments will be satisfied with instruction in English, no matter what "advanced" methods are adopted. The law holds good that you cannot squeeze blood out of a stone or make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. The principle of the unteachability of a certain percentage of young people in the use of English is so obvious to an outsider that he is often astonished at the educator's blindness to it. Some of our trouble comes from the fact that we give our allegiance to a theory and not to a fact.

Moreover, at least a few of those who complain of the quality of English-department instruction base some of their strictures on mistaken premises. Goodness knows that even Juniors and Seniors (and may I add professors and school superintendents?) often use atrocious English; I have no objection to deploring that fact, but it is less than wholly intelligent to deplore "mistakes" that are mistakes only because a given educator studied Hill's *Rhetoric* when he was in college, instead of West's, or because he has theories as to what the English language should be instead of having knowledge of what it is.

There is first of all what may be called the fallacy of logic in the use of English. No fact is more certain than that logic and correctness in English are not by any means always the same thing. Many a logic-ridden educator in other departments blames the student because his use of English violates logic. But, by thunder! that's the nature of the beast we have by the tail. We recognize the logic of illogic in spelling but not by any means always in phrasing and especially not in punctuation or capitalization. As a familiar case in point, take this sentence from an article in the *English Journal*: "In Plato's scheme, plutocracy was one step lower than 'timocracy,' the society motivated by the desire for 'honor.'" The comma after "timocracy" and the period after "honor" are as illogically placed as possible; obviously, if logic is to be respected, the comma should come *after* the quotation mark, for that mark is part of the word, and the period should also follow the quotation mark, because does not logic require that the period should mark the end of the sentence, and isn't the quotation mark a part of the sentence? Nine out of ten instructors in other departments (and I am sorry to say, even some in English departments) will follow logic—incorrectly. Confronted

by such a student sentence in a term paper, they would have the impulse to repunctuate it like this: "In Plato's scheme, plutocracy was one step lower than 'timocracy', the society motivated by desire for 'honor' ". And that in spite of the fact that nearly all publishing houses (exceptions, a fraction of 1 per cent) follow the method that was correctly used by the *English Journal*. In at least some instances it is not the student who uses incorrect English; it is the instructor in other departments who is ignorant of actual practice as over against ideal logic.

As an editor I have, of course, always understood that when logic clashes with practice logic should go. I said that we recognize illogic in spelling, but even there students are sometimes blamed for 'mistakes' that cannot reasonably be charged up against them. Take our old friend Shakespeare-Shakspeare. In college I had been taught to spell it "Shakespeare"; in the leisurely academic world there was plenty of time to put in as many letters as the name would reasonably hold. When I became an editor I discovered that the name was spelled "Shakspeare." The elimination of two letters may in the course of a year somewhat reduce the wear on typewriter ribbons, and, more important, it will lower the expense of type-setting. I heard of at least one professor who bitterly blamed an English department for not teaching its students to spell the poet's name the way the professor himself had learned it in college. Moreover, the name was obviously made up of two words: "shake" and "speare" (conveniently ignoring that final *e*). The appeal to logic!

As an editor I am almost painfully aware of the fact that the poor students of beginning English are between seven devils and seven times seven deep blue seas. The various composition texts and handbooks have an assortment of rules and regulations that the student is asked to become familiar with. (That terminal preposition would be frowned on in some of them, in spite of a rather wide practice to the contrary.) In many of the newspapers that the students read a system is followed that violates some of those rules. Again, take a familiar example: A professor of chemistry reproached a student for lower-casing "freshman," "sophomore," "junior," and "senior" in a term paper. The student defended himself on the ground that the professor of journalism, a member of the English department, had

required lower-casing the words. The chemistry professor called the journalism instructor ignorant, unmindful of the fact that in nine out of ten of even the most carefully edited newspapers the words are lower cased. (The economic factor is responsible—it costs more to upper-case than to lower-case a letter.) It was obviously the sensible thing for the journalism instructor to advise lower-casing the words, even though all the textbooks in Christendom ruled against the practice. I am not blaming the textbooks; they are doing the best they can with the medley that is the English language. But sometimes professors, especially those in other departments, are more cocksure than they have a right to be and mistake their own linguistic habits for universal laws.

A professor of history may require this form in footnotes: "The decline and fall of the Roman empire"; a teacher of library technique (or technic) may demand "Decline and fall of the Roman empire, The"; the English department would doubtless require "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire." From an editor's point of view all three are "correct"—anything is "correct" that follows the style sheet of the publication for which it is written. In most newspapers we read "twentieth century," in many magazines and books, "Twentieth Century"; in newspapers we find the "Upjohn company," in magazines and books, the "Upjohn Company"; in newspapers, "Hillsdale college," in magazines and books, "Hillsdale College." All are correct—in their proper medium. But the poor learner of English is confronted with a variety of usages that is confusing, to put it mildly. Logic and uniformity are not of the essence of the English language, and at least some of the reproach heaped upon students for their inexpertness in the use of their mother-tongue is due to the inability of the critics to recognize this fact. An editor is in a favored position to learn it because he deals daily with practical immediacies, not with theories.

Looking at Freshman English as an editor and not as a teacher, I cannot honestly find it in my heart to reproach the English teacher for the kind of job he is doing. Unit for unit, he is probably turning out as good a piece of work as the physics teacher is doing or the history teacher or the economics teacher. It is as unreasonable to expect him to make masters of English out of all students as it would

be to expect an editor to turn every cub who aspires to become a "journalist" into an efficient reporter. And even for those who have enough language sense to be teachable in English there is a confusion of practices that is hardly to be met with in any other branch of study. There is the classic newspaper conundrum: "What is the difference between an editor and a doctor? *Answer:* An editor publishes his mistakes, a doctor buries his." The English teacher publishes his failures, in term papers and laboratory notes; he himself seldom has the chance to learn of the weaknesses of the products of other departments. That does not call for complacency on his part—the quality of English teaching can never be good enough; it does call for more tolerance on the part of instructors in other departments. Are they dead sure that the parable of the mote and the beam does not apply to them?

REMEDIAL READING—GROUP TREATMENT

UNA B. ELLIOTT AND GEORGE ADRIAN KUYPER¹

Our premise is not that group instruction is preferable to individual clinical procedure; rather, our contention is that, given a situation where there is no alternative, group instruction is not a hopeless way to try to solve the problem of college reading improvement.

During the last few years our main aim has been to clarify our thinking on this problem and to work out some solution which will enable us to use fully our opportunities to salvage potential college-student material or, where this is not possible, to give to the less favorably endowed students a sufficient grasp of this tool subject, along with the necessary interests and attitudes, to enable them to be lifelong learners.

Hampton Institute was one of the first colleges to give systematic training in reading improvement. Our standards have been gradually raised until, at present, we require a tenth-grade or better reading

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ability before our entering Freshmen are excused from taking English B, commonly called "Remedial Reading." We may say, parenthetically, however, that the name of the course is being changed to "Learning To Study," not only because of the effect we expect the change to have upon the students' attitude toward taking the course but also because this title is more consonant with our aims and objectives.

The Iowa Silent Reading Test is given as part of the whole battery of entrance tests. The different forms of the New Stanford Reading Tests are used periodically throughout the course.

The first three weeks are given over mainly to intensive drills in speeding up the rate of reading and to substantiating the findings of the standardized reading test. Marginal students are subjected to informal, and to further standardized, testing in order that there may be no uncertainty as to their need for reading hospitalization. Those who must take the noncredit remedial course forego the taking of some required credit course, usually history or some other subject which requires much reading.

Each class, which averages about fifteen members, is divided into X, Y, and Z ability groups, in order that individual differences may receive attention. For these groups there is a gradation of requirements in such considerations as vocabulary to be mastered, the amount of reading to be done outside class, and the extent of written reports.

The upper group works the most independently. This X group, for instance, may be working silently, attacking larger thought units, while the instructor supervises the slower students in their effort to understand smaller thought units. In outlining, the higher-level students do more complicated work; in the use of the study guides each student progresses at his own rate, receiving help as he needs it; and in the selecting of books the highest groups choose theirs from lists which they find in their syllabi, while the other students meet with the instructor in a seminar room of the library to make selections from the books that have been assembled there.

Along with the need to make provisions for taking care of individual differences goes the necessity for careful planning. Materials are sorted and made accessible. Time limits are set up—but, inci-

dentally, disregarded when unforeseen opportunities present themselves for the filling-in of background gaps.

Our class period, roughly speaking, is given over to ten minutes of exchange of ideas, assignments, comments on work returned to students, suggestions, and recommendations; fifteen minutes of vocabulary, phrasing, and background work, intrinsic within the reading matter of the class period, together with review work; twenty-five minutes of actual reading, different attacks and methods being used with each of the three groups within the class. During the third class period of each week the techniques learned are applied to the content of other courses.

A third necessity is the following of Dr. Dewey's dictum that we must color the atmosphere with that which we wish our students to learn. In the case of reading improvement this can be done by making the room look more like a reading laboratory than like an ordinary classroom: by making use of bulletin boards, charts, pictures, posters, and maps; by having books accessible; by keeping in view such aphorisms as are to be found in *Anatomy of Bibliomania*; by having for spare-moment reading, before the entire class assembles, folders labeled "Do You See the Point?" "What Does This Mean?" "Does This Interest You?" and containing jokes, cartoons, news items or short articles, all of which the students themselves may have clipped from current newspapers and magazines provided for that purpose; and by having an improvised, if not a mechanized, tachistoscope or anything else that not only furthers better reading habits but which also makes the whole procedure seem to be not merely a rehashing of grade reading but something different, scientific, and interesting.

Another necessity is a syllabus, containing such background materials as "Characteristics of a Good Student," "Suggestions for Planning a Daily Time Schedule," "Reading Disabilities and Probable Causes," "Reading Objectives and Means of Attaining Them," along with book lists, materials for vocabulary development, and study guides.

Through our study guides, it may be said, we purpose to spiral the students from sixth- to eighth- to tenth- to twelfth-grade ability

in the use of study techniques. We are finding that books of the Rugg and Kreuger "Social Science Series" lend themselves most satisfactorily to this project.

A functional notebook is necessary. The term "functional" is used advisedly since the notes, graphs, reports, and other materials must be made not merely because the instructors demand them but also because the students realize that these all help them toward becoming better readers and better students.

The climax of all the necessities for making the most of the group-teaching, remedial-reading situation is the instructor himself. He should know not only the basic principles which the deficient readers undoubtedly failed to grasp in their earliest learning-to-read stages, but he must also know the involved uses to which reading skills are applied as well as have a keen realization of the part that reading can play in the enrichment of personality. He must know his students both as cases and as persons. He must also know how to work each one at a good level of accomplishment through the use of consistent drill, "pep talks," judicious pushing, hearty encouragement, or good-natured badgering.

We would not omit from a remedial-reading program—or an account of one—the values that we find in choral or group speaking as an extracurricular activity. It is an excellent means of establishing a closer relationship between a remedial-reading teacher and her students. Choral speaking, in contrast to the old-time concert recitation, is marked first by group discussion which is followed by a group-mindedness in which there is a plasticity which makes it possible for the teacher, in the role of a director, to mold a communal expression of the interpretation arrived at through group expression.

It can be heartily recommended, also, for other remedial-reading values such as lightening what can be a heavy learning atmosphere, motivating the desire for better speech, developing a sense of rhythm or phrasing, engendering self-confidence, and providing contact with the fine prose and poetry that lends itself to ensemble speaking.

Even after having taken this wishful view of our group-teaching reading situation we are still willing to grant the desirability of hav-

ing the well-equipped laboratory with a staff of specialists in psychology and ophthalmology to enable us to reach more expertly our special cases.

Without it, however, we shall not be discouraged, since as matters stand most of our remedial-reading students make a surprising improvement; since we have found that many students do better work under the stimulation of group competition than they do in a class by themselves; since we know of an outstanding clinic where little or no attention is given to reading idiosyncrasies; and since the literature of this field gives us authority for the assertion that many capable readers are as handicapped psychologically and physiologically as are incapable readers, but that these handicaps have been overcome by *the will to read*—a determination which, incidentally, can be nurtured in a classroom as well as in a clinic.

ROUND TABLE

PRESERVING A PLACE FOR ENGLISH

It seems to me that the "Statement of the Committee of Twenty-four" befores the issue. It presumes that literature needs defending as a way of education and culture for the individual student, rugged or otherwise. As far as I know, there has been never an educationist or pedagogue or scholar who questioned this value of literature, albeit departments of English may have largely ignored the needs of this same individual in formulating their courses of study. It presumes, likewise, that stress on the "social values" is inimical to "values of individual enrichment" and implies that the social studies, so-called, are encroaching upon the domain of literature, neither of which presumptions is tenable.

The real issue is not between literature and social studies or between "values of individual enrichment" and "social values" but rather between *teachers* of English and *teachers* of social studies. The Statement is a subterfuge in that it does not frankly recognize this issue. The expansion of the social studies with the resultant attempt to make the whole curriculum revolve around an axis of social science is largely a response to a popular demand that education do something about the social chaos of the modern world. This expansion has come not so much at the wish of teachers of social studies as at the demand of administrators, politicians, and the public at large, though teachers of social studies have certainly not despised the importance thrust upon them and have even seized the hour to their own advantage.

It is our job to prevent, if we can, the complete domination of the curriculum by teachers of the social studies. We can do this only by taking just as active a part in revising the curriculum as teachers of social studies are taking. To put it bluntly, we must become more concerned with the muddy problems of general education and even pedagogy and abandon our pose as curators of cultural relics. It is my belief that we cannot take an active part in solving the problems of general education without laying heavy emphasis on the "social values," which the Statement views with alarm, but it is equally my belief that there is no need for sacrificing "values of individual enrichment" in order to accomplish this emphasis.

The most unfortunate thing about this report is that it may lull us to

sleep in our own self-satisfaction, thinking that having justified the study of literature for individual enrichment (which did not need justifying) we are secure in our place. What we have to do is to justify ourselves, justify our teaching of English. I must confess that I do not believe we can justify the course of study in English which has dominated, in its various manifestations, the undergraduate college work of the last twenty-five years, nor can we justify the typical teacher of English turned out by our graduate schools. The course of study in English cannot be justified because it has been almost entirely confined above the Freshmen year (sometimes even in it) to the interests and abilities of the special student in English. The graduate schools of English have propagated themselves in miniature on the undergraduate level. They have hawked and sneered at every attempt to adapt a course of study to the needs of students. One recalls the pharisaical and sneering criticism heaped upon *A Correlated Curriculum* published by the National Council. The graduate schools of English have assumed a lofty and supercilious attitude toward pedagogical problems in general and toward the problems of the public school in particular.

I think that we can justify a course of study in English only when we work out one that will reasonably meet the needs of the college students and high-school students who are swarming into our schools. It cannot be the same course of study that satisfied a generation ago, for democracy is catching up with higher education just as it has caught up with secondary education. The increasing numbers of college Freshmen who cannot be taught as if they were products of the more selective secondary school of a generation ago make it necessary that the college curriculum be revised throughout. Under the guise of defending what is called "learning" or "standards," professors of English and the various learned societies to which they belong have constantly opposed every attempt to adapt the curriculum to meet the need.

May I cite just one example of how out of joint the teaching of English is? We are assuming that students who come to college can read. Perhaps some of the heavily endowed schools can continue to eliminate those who cannot read, but all other schools need to provide a course of study in English which will presume that students should be taught to read as well as that they should be taught literature. Has the typical college department of English made much effort to teach reading? Having made some study of the matter, I assure you that the problem has been largely ignored.

I think we had better forget the statement of this joint committee and

appoint a new one to draw up realistic recommendations for revising the study of English in order to preserve its essential humanism and at the same time to meet the needs and abilities of the hordes of students swarming at our gates. In spite of the fact that some excellent work of a preliminary nature has been done by the National Council through the publication of such monographs as Professor O. J. Campbell's *The Teaching of College English*, there is little evidence that our graduate schools of English or the powers that direct the destinies of our learned societies have seen the necessity of attacking problems any less remote than theories of criticism and ablaut verbs. If we do not evolve a more realistic program, then the teacher of English literature is actually in danger. He is in danger not of overstressing "social values" at the expense of "values of individual enrichment" but of falling into disuse as an instrument of general education, just as the teacher of Latin did some time ago, because he could not adapt his teaching to the demands of a changing problem in education.

STATE TEACHERS COLLEGE
FLORENCE, ALABAMA

ROY P. BASLER

IN DEFENSE

MY DEAR MR. HATFIELD:

No article could have been more timely than Professor John T. Flanagan's "American Literature in American Colleges" which appeared in *College English* for March, 1940. Because I recognize in Professor Flanagan an ardent champion in a common cause—the advancement of American studies—I regret the necessity of calling attention to apparent inaccuracies in his article. Since some of these inaccuracies, however, touch the standing and good repute of New York University and since the injury of a sister-institution is probably farthest from Professor Flanagan's intention, he will welcome, I feel sure, such correction as I can offer.

Professor Flanagan reports only nine courses in American literature at New York University—a figure considerably under the number which we actually give. I am led to believe that Professor Flanagan's inaccuracy here is the result of an incomplete survey of the bulletin material available from this institution. Like most universities, New York University announces its courses in bulletins issued for each division. A check which I

have made indicates that Professor Flanagan must have based his estimate upon an examination of the bulletin of the Washington Square College alone. The offering in American literature in New York University in *all divisions* in 1939-40 was as follows:

Washington Square College.....	9 courses [Professor Flanagan's figure]
University college.....	3
School of commerce.....	1
School of education.....	1
Graduate school.....	7
Total.....	21

According to this absolutely accurate report of courses offered at New York University and assuming, which perhaps I should not do, that Professor Flanagan's figures for other universities are accurate, I find that New York University, rather than the University of Chicago, leads the country in its offering in American literature.

In his tabulation of courses Professor Flanagan does not allow New York University a single graduate course, although quite inconsistently he writes that "at Harvard, New York University, and the University of Chicago it is possible for a candidate for an advanced degree to take the majority of his work in American literature." If New York University permits graduate students to do this and yet offers no graduate courses, the inference that the reader of Professor Flanagan's article must draw is that our graduate students are permitted to take undergraduate courses for graduate credit, which is naturally not the case. In point of fact, we offer seven courses in American literature in our graduate school, not one of which is open to undergraduates and all of which are well attended by properly qualified graduate students.

My examination of the article leads me to doubt how much it shows about the true situation in American literature. We have, for example, an altogether different idea of the way in which American literature should be presented than prevails at Wisconsin. At the latter institution the survey of American literature is taught in two sections, meeting twice a week (which Professor Flanagan counts as one point). At Washington Square College alone we have five sections in the subject, meeting three times a week (which is also counted as one point). Yet the registration in the course is greater than in any other elective (even though it is not a prerequisite for other work in American literature) and is coming up rapidly on that of the required survey in English literature (which all majors in English in the college must take). If Professor Flanagan was

seeking proof of the progress being made in American literature, what better evidence could he have had than this?

Finally, setting aside Professor Flanagan's data on American colleges, I wish to lodge, if I may, a caveat against his suggestion that the "regional approach" is a happy innovation in American colleges. It seems to me a way to stimulate provincialism, sentimentality, and obscurantism. I invite his consideration of courses in the American theater (both stage and dramatic history), in American folklore (our Miss Barnicle has 130 students in such a course—though conservatives like Professor Flanagan and myself do not tally it as literature), and in literary relationships (German-American, for example, such as Professor Pochmann offers at Wisconsin). These, it seems to me, breed cosmopolitanism and teach general appreciation.

Please understand that not merely justice to a progressive institution but fairness to a liberal administration and to colleagues who have given much time and thought to the substance of our American-literature offering prompt me to write this letter.

Respectfully yours,

OSCAR CARGILL

Associate Professor of English

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

"LABORATORY WORK" IN ENGLISH

With the recent completion of the new library building at the George Washington University, special space has been made available for the operation of a "writing laboratory." Although its facilities, including reference books and a staff consultant, have been made available to all the students of the university who wish to work there or who their instructors suggest go there to prepare papers for other courses, the major purpose of the installation is the improvement of formal composition-writing in Freshman English.

Located in a large room with broad tables and plenty of elbow space for one hundred and twenty students, this laboratory is the scene of work on impromptu themes previously written on narrow arms of classroom seats and of the actual writing of more thoroughly prepared longer papers—of the "average" theme length if you wish. Its operation during the first semester has been similar to that of the average scientific laboratory, where the instructor gives personal guidance to individual work in

process. During the second semester students have written their first drafts during a laboratory period and then a week later, when the writing is cold in their minds, revised their papers in detail before handing them in. The laboratory is not used for the grading of papers, for the answering of minor questions, or for those personal conferences between teacher and student on completed work which are the basis of all successful teaching of composition. These are done elsewhere more privately.

Theme topics are previously assigned. A student comes to the laboratory session with an outline, and perhaps even with part of his theme completed. The instructor scrutinizes the plan as a whole while it is in this embryo stage. (He has to move, I will admit, to get around his class!) He makes no detailed comments at this time. He does not even (and he is an English instructor, save the mark!) make specific corrections of spelling, punctuation, grammar, sentence structure, or idiom. He makes only general comments on the outline and on the development and scope of the subject. The student then goes on and solves his own special problem by finishing his theme in the laboratory, where he can get specific direction and further aid if he needs it, just as the chemistry or physics college student has for many years himself solved the problems outlined for him in the laboratory, with his chemistry or physics instructor ready to aid, to set him straight, but not to do his work for him.

At the end of the scheduled laboratory period the student takes home his work—outline and first draft—completes the composition by himself, and hands both his notes and the finished product to the instructor the next time his regular class meets.

Key to the composition-course use of the laboratory—and most effective during the fumbling first stages of the first semester when the student is looking for his “seven points of departure”—is the generalized critique on the student’s preliminary draft or outline, to guide the student while the work is in process. Another advantage is, however, already apparent—especially during the second semester. For decades college teachers have urged students to write themes early so as to leave time for them to get “cold” before final revisions. But the procrastinating collegian has all too often completed his theme only the night before, or perhaps even only the hour before, behind the leaves of a history notebook during a course lecture. The mechanics of the George Washington system, particularly during the second semester—with the delay between the writing of the final draft in the laboratory and the date when it is handed in in final form—is found more nearly to enforce such late second scrutiny than any other reasonable plan.

Use of the laboratory by students in courses not devoted to composition-writing is intended as a general facility and also as a step toward close co-operation between the English and other departments of the university. Other professors have already co-operated by furnishing lists of "long-theme" or "research-paper" topics which will bridge interdepartmental gaps between substance and mere style. They are now advising students who have difficulties with term papers or book reports in those other courses to visit the laboratory for advice and expert assistance. We hope and expect that the practice will grow.

Experience with a similar laboratory at the University of Minnesota, as reported by Dean J. M. Thomas of that institution, indicates that there is one other major value of such a writing laboratory for students not doing course work in composition. He considers especially important the fact that there is under a university roof a convenient place where students may work continuously on their writing without being subjected to the customary distractions and interruptions which interfere with them at home, fraternity house, or the main reading-rooms of the library itself. Many students at George Washington have already indicated that they appreciate this refuge. Not very many, to be sure, but we are finishing only our first year with this laboratory. Growth of such a use and appreciation depends upon luring students into the laboratory in the first place, upon their finding it convenient (we are told they even write letters home in the laboratory at Florida), and upon the word being passed along by word of mouth, from student to student as well as from teacher to student.

ELBRIDGE COLBY

GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

AMBROSE BIERCE AND "ALL OF"

Says Mr. Bierce (*Write It Right*),¹ speaking of "all of": "The words are contradictory: an entire thing cannot be *of* itself. Omit the preposition."

Had Mr. Bierce limited himself to the injunction, no one could object to what he says. But having gone to grammar and logic to establish it, he actually weakens his case. For although "all of" is frequently bad style, perhaps more often so than not, on the side of idiom a thing may not only be *of* itself, but even, to carry the anomaly further, be *of* its parts.

"Of" expresses too wide a variety of relationships to be clearly defined,

¹ Union Library Association, 1934, s.v. "all of."

to say nothing of limiting these relationships to a certain few. It may express the object of an action: "This laughter will be the death of me"; the subject of an action: "The coming of the train"; the origin of something: "He is the son of James"; the originator of something: "James is the father of John"; pure description: "God of love," "man of peace," "boy of ten"; and so on indefinitely.

Consider a few of the phrases in which a thing is of itself, and which would have to be banished, on logical grounds, along with "all of": "the city of Toledo"; "a fool of a man"; "the totality of things"; "the sum of the parts." Or a few which, more unpardonably still, make the thing of something less than itself: "a man of few words" (the words are of the man); "a different kind of person" (the person is of the kind); "a new type of engine" (the engine is of the type); "more of the same." Many mathematical expressions would be outlawed—improper fractions (" $\frac{1}{2}$ of the quantity x "), percentages of over one hundred, etc.

Even "all of" at times has its advantages. To the sensitive ear "all of them are" may be more euphonious, by reason of the unstressed "of," than the staccato "they all are." In answer to the question, "How much of it have you?" most of us would prefer "All of it" to "It all"—probably because "it all" has the association of "everything" from expressions like "know it all" and "do it all," where "it" is used impersonally, as it also is in "It all [the whole business] makes me very sad." "All of it" in the same context would have a slightly different meaning. A schoolteacher in the deep South would probably have much better luck with "all of you" than with "you all."

In short, the adjective "all" may be preferable, with exceptions, to the pronoun "all"—if the case rests on style. But to rule it out on the grounds of logic, and to be consistent in ruling out all similar expressions, would be a calamity. Lincoln knew his idioms when he spoke of the futility of trying to fool "all of the people all of the time."

DWIGHT L. BOLINGER

WASHBURN COLLEGE
TOPEKA, KANSAS

AN INDEX OF LANGUAGE PREJUDICE

I should like to add just one thing to Carl W. Dykema's excellent article, "Criteria of Correctness," which appeared in the April, 1940, number of *College English*. He quite justly points out that the findings of *Facts about Current English Usage* which I compiled in conjunction with

Fred Walcott is of no particular help in determining what the "best people" consider to be the status in usage of any particular expression. He goes on to say, also justly, that, although we list both "ain't I" and objective preverbal "who" as colloquial, the former would be much more "dangerous" to use.

It was precisely for this reason that we insisted upon publishing as a second part of our study the findings of the original Leonard report. As we explained in our introduction, the original report was primarily a survey of opinion about language; ours was primarily a survey of usage itself. To return to the problem of "ain't" and "who," the dangerousness of "ain't" as compared with "who" could easily be ascertained by consulting the Leonard study proper, since "who" was there rated as "established," whereas "ain't" emerged with the label "disputable." If one were inclined to pursue the topic further, one could turn to the "Summary Sheet of Ballots" which is appended both to the original study and to our report. An analysis of the votes indicates that "ain't" was much more severely condemned by the members of the English Council than by the professional linguists who considered the matter. Of 16 linguists voting on the item, 6, that is to say more than one-third of them, considered "ain't" as established for informal usage. On the other hand, of 32 English teachers considering the expression, all but 2 voted it illiterate.

Turning now to objective "who," we find that 27 out of 29 linguists consider this expression appropriate for formal or informal use. Of the English teachers, 31 out of 51 were similarly minded. Of the other groups who voted, the authors were most severe in their condemnation; almost two-thirds of them condemned it as illiterate.

It is too much to expect, perhaps, that every teacher will take the trouble to make so careful an analysis of every troublesome error which plagues him from time to time. But I did want to point out that National Council Monograph No. 7 has in it material to arrive at an index of prejudice as well as of usage.

ALBERT H. MARCKWARDT

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

UTOPIAN TIME

Feb. 23, 1940

DEAR EDITOR:

Mr. Wykoff should reckon up the hours it would take for the basic work of his Utopian composition teacher.¹

	Hours
3 sections @ 3 hours weekly	9
110 ten-minute conferences weekly	18
110 themes weekly @ 15 min. each (to be read twice, "slowly and carefully") ..	27

54

Even after this much work our Utopian instructor has not done half what Mr. Wykoff proposes. He must also learn the students' interests and prepare for classes. Estimating conservatively, I reckon he would need at least 16 hours more for this, making a total, so far, of 70 hours.

He could then utilize the other 70 hours in the various useful ways specified. But I am afraid he would go short on sleep!

Sincerely,

ARTHUR M. COON

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

¹ *College English*, February, 1940.

NEWS AND NOTES

THE PERIODICALS

LITERARY TOPICS

The leading article in the summer issue of the *Kenyon Review* is Philip Wheelwright's "On the Semantics of Poetry." To rescue discussions about poetry from the danger of sliding imperceptibly into discussion of things with which the poem has historical or conceptual or functional connections, we must find a language adequate to tell how poetry, as distinguished from logic and history and science (which use conceptual language and presuppose the identification of meaning with conceptual meaning, of truth with propositional truth), goes about its business.

On the atomic or word level we find that literal language makes use of the "monosign," the word of definite and constant meaning, whereas poetic language tends to use the "plurisign," which not only may alter its meaning from instance to instance but also may carry a plurality of meanings. Sometimes these plural meanings are two or more denotations. More often only one meaning of the plurisign is denotative and the others connotative. Finally, a poetic plurisign may carry no denotative meaning but be purely evocative.

On the sentence level the unit of poetic language is the poetic statement as contrasted with the proposition of literal language. A proposition is a relation between monosigns which can properly be labeled true or false. A poetic statement may be a quasi-assertible relation between plurisigns, that is, a relation which we can accept as it is suggested or not too soberly asserted. "A poem is complex tension among variously related plurisigns," *some* of which *may* have sufficiently assertive character to approximate literal statement.

The total poem makes a total statement which is not, like that of prose, a summation of the component statements or a conclusion from them.

To summarize: (1) Poetic statements may vary from almost full assertion to almost pure nonassertive tension between plurisigns. (2) Poetic statements may vary from the simplest sentence to the total statement of the poem. (3) A poetic statement may vary in plurisignative fulness, that is, in the number of quasi-assertions which it makes simultaneously.

The summer number of the *Southern Review* is a Thomas Hardy Centennial Issue. Its entire 224 pages are devoted to articles on Hardy by John Crowe Ransom, R. P. Blackmur, Delmore Schwartz, W. H. Auden, Allen Tate, Katherine Anne Porter, Donald Davidson, Jacques Barzun and others. To review so miscellaneous a collection of essays is impossible; to choose one for summarization would be invidious. Single copies of the magazine may be obtained for seventy-five cents from Albert R. Erskine, Jr., at Louisiana State University.

In the summer issue of the *Virginia Quarterly Review* Louis Untermeyer discusses "New Meanings in Reading American Poetry." "Poetry in America has never been more alive than it is at this moment," and after twenty years' lull in production there are evidences of a coming outburst. The rising writers do not belong to a school—nor did those of the nineteen-teens—but in spite of their almost infinite variety most of them are characterized by a passionate eagerness to get at the psychological and social truth, however painful that may be. There is in general also a reaction from the definiteness of the imagists and their use of symbols familiar to us all to a somewhat bookish allusiveness and the use of classical or personal symbols less obvious to the reader. Mr. Untermeyer discusses briefly William Carlos Williams, Dennis Patchen, and Merrill Moore, and refers to more than a score of the younger writers.

PROFESSIONAL TOPICS

The constant complaint that college graduates and high-school graduates cannot write either correctly or fluently led Adeline Courtney Bartlett, who has taught in schools and colleges in five states and the Orient, to protest vigorously in *Harper's* for June. Her article entitled "They Write Worse and Worse" is divided into three sections: (1) Who makes the complaint? (2) Is the complaint justified? and (3) What the complainants can do about it.

Professor A(cademic) is not a competent judge, first, because he thinks that all his classmates used language as well as he did and does, whereas he was doubtless close to the top of his class; and, second, because he frequently still believes the arbitrary pronouncements of his instructors, many of them never sound and many others now obsolete. Mr. B(usiness), on the other hand, may not have been a good student and may not really know his language. (In the Leonard study *Current English Usage* businessmen were much more conservative [?] than either the teachers or editors but significantly unwilling to allow their names to be used in the published results.)

The complaint would be amply justified if it were that the average student *does* not write correctly or fluently rather than *cannot*. Mr. Smith, expecting to be an executive, feels that he doesn't have to know the mechanics of English; and Miss Smith, hoping to be a dancer or to model furs and evening gowns, thinks that she doesn't either. If the world honored and rewarded correct and fluent writing, these young people would learn to write correctly and fluently. There is the further difficulty, however, that the English teachers have been too heavily burdened to give the students the individual attention, frequently in personal conference, that is necessary to produce improvement. Besides, Mr. Smith frequently hands in themes which he has hired someone to do for him, just as his father and mother pay ghost writers to produce club papers and after-dinner speeches.

It is not true, however, that the students write worse and worse. We judge the writing of college students of the past by that of the brilliant persons who made reputations and whose writing has been preserved. Young people probably write as well as their fathers and grandfathers and as well as they really perform in science, history, and mathematics.

Professor A and Mr. B may help, first, by learning the English language themselves; second, by seeing to it that the English departments have programs no more burdensome than other departments, so that they can do their work right; and, third, by discouraging cheating.

In the May number of the *Journal of Higher Education* William Charvat gives a somewhat detailed description of "A Course in the History of American Society," as taught by him and Thomas C. Cochran, of the history department, at Washington Square College, New York University. "The course deals with American civilization from 1830 to the present," being thus sufficiently restricted to permit the offering of detailed factual material rather than mere generalizations. An attempt to give a rapid preliminary view of eighteenth-century American and European backgrounds confused the students because only generalities without details were possible.

"The basis of the course is politics, economics, literature, and the arts of painting and architecture. Allied subjects . . . are education, religion, philosophy, science, and the moving pictures." Between them a history teacher and an English teacher should know something about all these aspects of our civilization. None of these subjects, however, is discussed for its own sake, but all are related to the central idea: "the development of bourgeois culture with the attendant conflict between industrialism and agrarianism."

Each instructor lectures from two to five hours in a unit. The course meets daily, with its ten points of credit for the year divided equally between history and English. Registration is limited to Juniors and Seniors who have had a course in earlier American history. Required reading calls for some 1,500 pages of original material, plus 1,500 additional pages of material in some one phase of history or politics. Readings are assigned from a number of books because no text for such a course is available.

The instructors are still experimenting. They "do not think that the course is a substitute for the regular courses in American history and literature, which they also teach, frequently to the same students."

Progressive Education, for the most part concerned with secondary and elementary schools, devoted two pages in its March issue to "Building a College Program in Literature Out of Student Needs and Interests." James Hight Hayford tells how a class of Freshmen and Sophomores at Goddard College began by viewing and discussing *Dust Be My Destiny*—a photoplay study of the problem of the young vagrant. "At one leap we were deep in the problems of telling a story—plot, characterization, social background, intended effect on the feelings and views of the audience." Then followed the reading of *A Farewell to Arms*, *Moll Flanders*, *The Canterbury Tales* (read for their stories and pictures, with a good deal of preliminary oral reading), Stone's *Lust for Life* (producing heated arguments on its aesthetics), *Sons and Lovers*, *Walden*, *Life on the Mississippi*, some Shakespeare historical plays, and Conrad Aiken's anthology, *Modern American Poetry*. The class also viewed *On Borrowed Time*, a revival of *Cavalcade*, and *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*. "We discussed . . . in the fashion of twenty intelligent adults who happen to have read the same book. . . . Discussions have been vigorous, reading and attendance faithful, and papers able."

The perennial problem of training college students to write clearly and correctly cannot be solved by the English department alone, says Harold C. Binkley, chairman of the English department, Juniata College, in his article "If the Salt Have Lost His Savor" in the *Journal of Higher Education* for April. Rehearsing the well-known dissatisfaction of teachers of literature and social studies and science with the written work of their students, he finds two causes for it: (1) the emptiness of Freshman composition without any proper subject matter and (2) the failure of instructors in other courses to insist upon students' writing as well as they can. His solution is to cancel Freshman composition—releasing six hours of

student time—and to assign composition teachers as advisers in the various schools and departments about the campus. Freshmen in Juniata College, for example, do 50 per cent more writing than they used to do under the older system and do it at least as well; and a similar procedure goes on into the upper years. Under this plan the staff are paid as before, the students show steady progress, and the faculty as a whole is becoming more concerned about literacy and clarity in expression.

A. H. Lass, acting editor of *High Points*, the New York City Board of Education house organ for secondary schools, wrote to the heads of the English departments in the New York municipal colleges asking what they expect of entering students in the matter of English skills, attitudes, and achievements. Of the three who replied, one stressed the need of making habitual the correctness of which students are capable upon urgent demand, and also the rather thorough reading of some great books rather than any emphasis upon literary history or upon contemporary literature. A second replied that his school hopes not to have to teach "the basic principles of the sentence or the paragraph nor the elementary mechanics of writing" and that in Freshman work his department lays great stress upon logical thinking and the ability to do independent investigation. He, too, asked for understanding and love of literature rather than information concerning it. The third department chairman again emphasized the importance of habitual correctness and decried especially the run-on sentence. She asked for greater ability to understand literature and for reasonable reading speed.

Attention is called here to this correspondence, partly because the replies were symptomatic but more because it is an instance of the growing commendable tendency of high schools and colleges to get together.

BOOKS

FRESHMAN ENGLISH IN ONE VOLUME

Harry Shaw's *A Complete Course in Freshman English*¹ comprises in one volume the three texts usually used in Freshman composition: rhetoric, handbook, and book of readings. The coming of this combination was inevitable; and it is a pleasure to record that the task has been admirably done.

Book I, on writing (172 pp.), is an excellent rhetoric, brief yet complete. The opening chapter—"An Approach to Theme Writing"—is an interest-compelling narrative of the first meeting of a composition class. Equally effective are the other chapters, especially those on vocabulary and the research paper. There is, of course, discussion of the conventional things: how to write the fundamental forms (exposition, argument, description, narration) and certain special types (autobiography, informal essay, criticism, interview, profile, formal essay, short story, précis, paraphrase, letters) by building from words through sentences and paragraphs to themes. But the distinguishing characteristic of Book I is its conversational style, developed always from the point of view of "you," the student. The vocabulary is understandable, with enough unfamiliar words interspersed to encourage the application of the vocabulary-building directions. Constant reference is made to the readings in Book III for illustrations of the various types and principles.

Book II, the handbook (184 pp.), is adequate, though in comparison with Book I less interesting (perhaps rules cannot be made interesting!). To accomplish its purpose—aid in re-writing—virtually everything is included that the Freshman needs, with considerable—perhaps too much—repetition of what has been said in Book I about the word, sentence, paragraph, and theme. Tinted paper makes the handbook easily findable; rules are located by a sensible system of numbers in multiples of five, i.e., grammar, 1-10; punctuation and mechanics, 11-25; etc. (Composition teachers still await a Dewey-Decimal or Library-of-Congress system of symbols or numbers, universal for all handbooks). In both Book I and Book II exercises are varied and numerous.

Book III, the readings (582 pp.), arranged by types (formal essays,

¹ New York and London: Harper & Bros., 1940. Pp. xvi+954. \$2.60.

debates, informal essays, criticism, profiles and portraits, short stories), serves three purposes: stimulating thinking and discussion, offering models, and illustrating the principles of Books I and II. Most of the readings are within the interest and comprehension of that vague individual known as the "average" Freshman.

Compared with its many merits, objections to the book are few. In any Freshman text, including this one, business letters are, and can be, treated only superficially; nor should Freshman composition be concerned with formal invitations and replies, thank-you notes, and notes of congratulation and sympathy. In the handbook some materials are omitted which, if included, would be of value to many Freshmen—the doubling-final-consonant spelling rule; case forms of all pronouns; principles by which tenses, voices, and modes of verbs are formed. In the readings brief biographies would increase interest in authors and their works.

Despite its nine hundred and seventy pages, the book is neither "heavy" nor inconvenient to handle. Its wealth of materials offers teacher and student considerable freedom of choice for writing and reading. The wish expressed by Watt in the Preface should easily be realized: "May it help to make teachers' burdens lighter, and students' themes better!"

GEORGE S. WYKOFF

PURDUE UNIVERSITY

CO-ORDINATION OF READING AND WRITING

For a number of years now the Freshman composition course has been seen more and more clearly as an opportunity for assisting the student to adjust himself to his environment. Instructors are recognizing that what he needs most as he enters college is not mere acquaintance with facts but guidance in clarifying for himself his own problems and making articulate what is already in his mind—though confused, unrelated, shapeless. Many feel that such guidance can best be provided in the composition class, not in addition to the writing but as an integral part.

Patterns for Living,¹ an anthology admirably suited to this end, encourages the student to examine and reflect upon the things about which he is concerned and so provide himself with something to say and a reason for saying it. The book is large, containing essays, fiction, drama,

¹ By Oscar James Campbell, Justine Van Gundy, and Caroline Shrodes. New York: Macmillan Co., 1940. Pp. xxii+1306.

and poetry, chiefly modern and contemporary but with sufficient literature from the past to show the continuity of culture and the persistence of certain human problems.

The selections should appeal strongly to most college Freshmen. More remarkable than the selections, however, is the organization of the book—an arrangement that gives the undergraduate time to consider his feelings about the close things of his life before he reaches out to the problems of the social group. Divided into two parts, the text concentrates first on "The Quest of the Individual for Personal Satisfaction." Under the headings of "The World of the Senses and of Nature," "Personal Relationships," "The Arts," "The World of Science," "The Appeal of Religion," and "The Good Life" writers from John Donne to Stephen Spender, Joseph Addison to Lewis Mumford, and Charles Dickens to John Steinbeck offer what they have written about men and women. The order is not chronological but follows the relation of ideas in the general development of the sections. Part II moves on to "The Quest of the Individual for Adjustment to the Social Group." The selections give the same diversity of opinion and forms of literature under groupings of "The Role of Education," "The Idea of Liberty and Democracy," "The Struggle for Justice," "War and Peace," and "The World of Tomorrow." This step-by-step development, since its principle is evolutionary rather than categorical, should help the student to escape much of the confusion inherent in the organization of the usual anthology.

Excellent lists for further reading, questions, suggestions for writing, and brief biographical sketches of the one hundred and fifty-odd authors are included at the back of the book. One could have wished that dates of the selections had been listed also, especially since a large number of the passages were written by authors of close to college age.

Though *Patterns for Living* is not a study of techniques and models, the variety of types in poetry, short story, essay, drama, and biography illustrates the possibilities of form through which a beginner can speak. Under sympathetic teaching, the book not only should encourage the average student to express himself but also might move the gifted one to make literature.

MURCO RINGNALDA
MARGARET B. RINGNALDA

WILLAMETTE UNIVERSITY
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AT LOS ANGELES

FOR AMERICAN LITERATURE

*A College Book of American Literature*¹ will please those teachers who prefer to emphasize early backgrounds more than it will satisfy those who lean toward the achievements of our past half-century. Especially generous in pre-1800 material, it offers about four hundred and fifty pages in that period (more than one-fifth of the combined volumes) and includes such uncommon writers as Daniel Gookin, Edward Taylor, Hugh Jones, Charles Chauncy, Samuel Peters, Thomas Young, Mary and Catherine Byles.

Though nearly as much space is given to post-1890 writings, there are in this closing section some weakening omissions. It represents writers such as Samuel Crothers, Hergesheimer, Churchill, and Tarkington but has nothing of T. S. Eliot, MacLeish, Wolfe, Steinbeck, Dos Passos, Faulkner, Sinclair Lewis, or Van Wyck Brooks. The only twentieth-century play given is O'Neill's *The Rope*, though seventy-five pages are devoted to Tyler's *The Contrast* and Boker's *Francesca da Rimini* (more to either of these than to all of Melville). Lindsay's poetry is allowed ten pages; Robinson's has less than four, and they do not include "Ben Jonson Entertains a Man from Stratford." Fault can be found, of course, with the selections in any large anthology; but these omissions and proportions seem unusually embarrassing.

The two volumes, housing more than one hundred and fifty writers, represent scores of them with much less than one full assignment for each. In order to squeeze in a few pages, for instance, from Gilder, Stoddard, Sill, Miller, the editors cut down to four pages Emerson's *Nature*, one of the most seminal writings of our nineteenth century. For several authors the editor's introductory sketch, longer than the selection itself, becomes the tail wagging the dog. But it is not entirely fair to point out such facts; nearly all the anthologies in American literature still serve up this bewildering variety of hors d'œuvres, leaving scant room for the main dishes. One is reminded of Randolph Bourne's account of the literary fare that upset him in his undergraduate days, of "the neatly arranged book of readings, with its medicinal doses of inspiration": "The great writers passed before his mind like figures in a crowded street. There was no time for preferences. . . . He found himself becoming a collector of literary odds-and-ends."

When will some publisher find the courage to get out a collection in

¹ By Milton Ellis, Louise Pound, and George W. Spohn. New York: American Book Co., 1940. Vol. I, pp. 1018; Vol. II, pp. 1089. \$2.50 each.

American literature that concentrates on the most significant figures and either ignores the minor ones or merely lists their recommended works? Most anthologies, like this before us, are more successful at embalming literature than at helping students really to bring it to life. They go on ignoring the plain fact that students retain nothing worth retaining about twenty-five authors each of whom they have read to the extent of only two or three pages.

But, as American anthologies now come and go, this one has its commendable features. Indeed, it is among the very best. It achieves a sensible balance of political-social matter and more strictly artistic writing. Furthermore, as one of its distinctive points, it includes for scores of authors provocative selections from their expressions of literary theory and creed—material that can be fruitful to the alert teacher.

Perhaps the strongest aspects of this work are the substantial and illuminating surveys of the six periods into which the field is divided, the interesting author introductions (though some of them waste words on insignificant details), and the unusually helpful up-to-date bibliography for each writer, including citations of articles as well as books. And the volumes are a delight to both the hand and the eye; they are excellently built.

ROBERT G. BERKELMAN

BATES COLLEGE
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IN BRIEF REVIEW

[Mention under this head does not preclude review elsewhere.]

FOR THE GENERAL READER

World's End. By Upton Sinclair. Viking. \$3.00.

Lanny Budd, illegitimate young son of an American munitions manufacturer and of a beautiful butterfly living in Europe, had an unusual opportunity to judge people. His mother's friends were rich and powerful; his father's friends promoted wars. Mr. Budd taught his admiring son that conniving munitions-makers were well matched by greedy statesmen. This is a provocative book of compelling power.

Night in Bombay. By Louis Bromfield. Harper. \$2.50.

A memorable group of characters gathered from many nations—crooks, adventurers, gamblers, politicians, French, British, Americans, and Indians—make up a tawdry and reckless society in Bombay. A study of character; of the restless urge of sordid, unhappy people; of selfishness and of service.

Quietly My Captain Waits. By Evelyn Eaton. Harper. \$2.50.

A historical romance-adventure story of Port Royal in Acadia. The dominant character is a powerful woman who experiences a compelling love. Movie rights are already sold.

To the Indies. By C. S. Forester. Little, Brown. \$2.50.

The author of *Captain Horatio Hornblower* tells the story of one of Columbus' West Indies voyages. The reader feels that it happened and that he was there.

Maid No More. By Helen Simpson. Reynal. \$2.50.

A well-told story, baffling in its implications, of a Cavalier who fled to America, of a religious fanatic, of slave ships, and of more.

Their Own Country. By Alice Tisdale Hobart. Bobbs-Merrill. \$2.50.

Stephen Chase—hero of the author's earlier *Oil for the Lamps of China*—after incredible sacrifices in China for an oil corporation, "resigns" and returns to America. At first the Chases feel a great security in their native country. At forty, Chase looks for a job! Personal integrity and the baffling problem of security versus graft, greed, and the cruelty of big business are treated with vigor and sympathy.

Roman Fountain. By Hugh Walpole. Doubleday. \$2.50.

"Immediate history, however disturbing and horrible, does not affect at all the life of the spirit," thinks Walpole, as he writes of the Rome he has known personally and of Pius XI and his successor.

Tumbledown Dick. By Howard Spring. Viking. \$2.00.

The author of *My Son, My Son* and that excellent autobiography of boyhood *Heaven Lies about Us* has written amusingly of another Manchester boy.

Ask Me Tomorrow. By James Gould Cozzens. Harcourt. \$2.50.

Francis Ellery, young college man—ambitious to write, egotistical, and an escapist—visits Italy, Switzerland, and France as tutor of a twelve-year-old boy. He falls in love, he *hopes*. It is hard to imagine a better study of a wishful youth.

The English Air. By D. E. Stevenson. Farrar & Rinehart. \$2.50.

Franz von Heiden, son of a Nazi official and of an English mother who died young, was sent by his father to study the English and lived with English friends of his mother. The story of his homecoming, his disillusionment with Hitler, is developed with deep understanding.

Cecile Pasquier. By Georges Duhamel. Holt. \$2.75.

The Pasquier family has figured in five previous novels by Duhamel, who ranks as a major literary figure in France. After generations of obscurity the family suddenly produces a scientist, a musician, and a financial wizard. The talented children in no way overshadow Papa Pasquier.

The Dark Stranger. By Constance W. Dodge. Penn. \$2.50.

A story of Colonial struggles in America—of Indian warfare and the part played by Dugald Maclean, adventurer and idealist.

The Terror of Peru. By Meade Minnigerode. Farrar & Rinehart. \$2.50.

This is a clever and entertaining adventure story developed from a portrait of a young man of the early eighteenth century. The tales are enchantingly related by an elderly descendant.

Anya. By Joy Davidman. Macmillan. \$2.50.

Anya, a beautiful Jewess, lived in Russia seventy years ago. Her story is the story of the people of the Russian Ukraine, with its traditions, oriental luxury—and poverty and hardships.

The Lion in the Garden. By G. B. Stern. Macmillan. \$2.50.

Norman Pascoe, caretaker, met a lion face to face in the garden at Weir Point. He captured the lion, and this brave act had an effect upon his ego that enhanced his future. The author of *The Matriarch* and *The Woman in the Hall* here tells an amusing tale with excellent effect.

I Married Adventure. Osa Johnson. Lippincott. \$3.50.

The wife of the famous adventurer and explorer, who for twenty years shared her husband's dangerous and exciting explorations of little-known corners of the world, tells about her fascinating experiences. A handsome volume with fine pictures.

Masks and Faces. By Phyllis Bottome. Little, Brown. \$2.50.

A collection of short stories by the author of *Private Worlds* and *Mortal Storm*. A wide range of characters inhabiting two worlds—real and artificial.

Candles in the Night. Edited by Joseph L. Barron. Farrar & Rinehart. \$2.50.

Twenty-three stories on Jewish subjects, written by gentile authors. Preface by Carl Van Doren.

The Feminine Fifties. By Fred Lewis Pattee. Appleton-Century. \$3.00.

According to Dr. Pattee, the 1850's in America were distinctly feminine. The author has shown skill in selecting and arranging material illustrating the change in the status of woman.

This Land Is Ours. By Louis Zara. Houghton Mifflin. \$2.75.

This popular historical novel covers the years 1755-1835 and the struggle of the English colonists to win the Northwest Territory from the Indians and the French.

New England Indian Summer, 1865-1915. By Van Wyck Brooks. Dutton. \$3.75.

This literary study presents short vivid glimpses into the lives of brilliant literary men and women and of more humble yet influential people who made history. Its characterization and evaluation of their writings is straightforward. This second of five volumes intended to cover the history of American literature may prove as popular as the first, *The Flowering of New England*, which won a Pulitzer Prize in 1937.

The Gaspé Coast. By Doris Montgomery. Dutton. \$3.00.

A very lovely and complete description of a region rapidly becoming a tourists' favorite. Photographs.

Detroit—Dynamic City. By Arthur Pound. Illustrated by E. H. Suydam. Appleton-Century. \$5.00.

Suydam's beautiful illustrations add much to this handsome volume. It is the story of the growth of a trading-post in a fur-bearing wilderness to the dynamic city of motors. The spirit of the city, its culture, its economics, its politics, and its charities are discussed readably.

This War. By Thomas Mann. Knopf. \$1.00.

A study of the emotional complex of the German people. "It is wilful blindness to believe that the German people do not support Hitler."

Down Jersey. By Cornelius Weygandt. Appleton-Century. \$5.00.

As in *The Dutch Country* and *Philadelphia Folk*, Weygandt has caught the spirit of a people, their traditions and customs. He has studied and loved the quaint houses and tools used by these men and women, whose values, we fear, are passing. Beautiful and readable.

Health Is Wealth. By Paul De Kruif. Harcourt. \$2.00.

"It costs the nation more to let people stay sick and bury them when they die than it would cost to keep them well."

The Story of the Pacific. By Hendrik Willem van Loon. Harcourt. \$3.00.

A very attractive and readable volume about the Pacific and its islands, the guesswork of its early history, Polynesia, the appearance of the white man, the Dutch explorers, Captain Cook, etc.

This Is on Me. By Katharine Brush. Illustrated by Susanne Suba. Farrar & Rinehart. \$2.75.

A fascinating story of a woman's experiences and accomplishments; her problems; and how, why, and where she has done things. She laughs at herself and gets away with it.

The Bedside Esquire. Edited by Arnold Gingrich. McBride. \$3.00.

Hemingway, Steinbeck, Dos Passos, Pietro di Donato, Maurois, Dreiser, and many others are represented in this collection of short stories culled from *Esquire*.

Robinson Jeffers: The Man and His Work. By Lawrence Clark Powell. Pasadena, Calif.: San Pasqual Press.

An excellent picture, comprehensive and readable, with a Foreword by Jeffers.

The Ordeal of Bridget Elia: A Chronicle of the Lambs. By Ernest C. Ross. University of Oklahoma Press. \$2.50.

A psychological biography which includes the Lambs' immediate social circle.

Contemporary American Authors: A Critical Survey and 219 Bio-bibliographies. By Fred B. Millett. Harcourt. \$3.75.

Begun as a revision of the 1929 edition of Manly and Rickert's book of the same title, this volume contains biographies and bibliographies of over two hundred authors, with a critical survey including some passages from the older book. The biographies are concise, complete, and in many cases composed in part of material contributed by their subjects.

Books That Changed Our Minds. Edited by Malcolm Cowley and Bernard Smith. Doubleday, Doran. \$2.50.

On lists of most influential (not best or favorite or most popular) books submitted to the *New Republic* by leaders of American thought the following authors were most frequently represented in this order: Veblen, Beard, Dewey, Freud, Spengler and Whitehead, Lenin, and I. A. Richards. A single work of each of these and of Henry Adams, Turner, Sumner, and Boas is discussed by an especially qualified critic.

In What Hour. By Kenneth Rexroth. Macmillan. \$1.75.

An anthology representative of the new American poets—definite in direction.

The March of the Barbarians. By Harold Lamb. Doubleday, Doran. \$3.75.

"Never did the future of the world hang in such suspense in so brief a time." This is a story, significant at the present, of ruthless descendants of Genghis Khan and their mastery of the greater part of the world. It took Russia four hundred years—we shudder to think—to throw off the barbaric rule thus imposed upon conquered nations.

Big Sandy. By Jean Thomas. Holt. \$2.75.

Mining and the drilling of oil wells are changing a rugged valley which for two centuries had retained its Old English customs. The author's tales of these mountain people are authentic.

The Delaware. By Harry Emerson Wildes. Farrar & Rinehart. \$2.50.

The latest addition to the popular "Rivers of America" series.

FOR THE COLLEGE TEACHER

A List of Books for College Libraries: 1931-38. Prepared by Charles B. Shaw. American Library Association. \$6.00.

A supplement to the publication of the same name prepared under the sponsorship of the advisory group on college libraries of the Carnegie Corporation of New York and published by the American Library Association in 1931. The list is classified according to the major college fields and gives references to the journals in which the titles have been reviewed.

Who Was When? By Miriam Allen deFord. Wilson. \$4.75.

This "dictionary of contemporaries"—a quick reference guide to 8,825 world-figures living between 500 B.C. and 1938 A.D.—is designed to reveal conveniently the contemporaries of any celebrated person of any given period. A glance at the tables will reveal, for example, during which period scientists and authors flourished or at what time painters or theologians seemed most numerous. The arrangement is chronological, but an alphabetical index is provided.

American Universities and Colleges. Edited by Clarence Stephen Marsh. 4th ed. American Council on Education. \$4.00.

The current edition of this handbook, revised every four years by the American Council on Education, contains a section summarizing major trends in American higher education. Contains lists of accredited higher institutions and authoritative information concerning 725 accredited colleges and universities in the United States.

Hardy of Wessex. By Carl J. Weber. Columbia University Press. \$3.00.

This biography, which appears shortly before the centenary of Hardy's birth, presents in chronological order those facts which throw light upon the development of Hardy's ideas, his motivation for writing, and the factors which led to the selection of the subjects of his novels and poems. The narrative deals with incidents of broad human and literary interest and is not interrupted by footnotes containing textual references. Ample notes in the appendixes supply the documentation which the scholarly reader will seek.

Examiner's Reading Diagnostic Record for High School and College Students. By Ruth Strang. Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University.

Record booklet with manual providing several forms of an oral reading test, blanks for intelligence- and reading-test scores with observations, current-reading interests, and other significant data for the individual study of the retarded reader in high school or college.

FOR THE SCHOLAR

European Balladry. By William J. Entwistle. Oxford University Press. \$5.50.

A scholarly survey of the origin and growth of ballads in the folk tradition. A study of the various types of evolution of ballads and a detailed characterization of the uniqueness, as well as the interdependence of the balladries of many European people.

The Road to Tryermaine. By Arthur H. Nethercot. University of Chicago Press. \$3.00.

Mr. Nethercot follows a clue in the interpretation of Coleridge's "Cristabel" which he believes both Professor Lowes in *The Road to Xanadu* and Ernest Hartley Coleridge overlooked or failed to investigate adequately.

From Donne to Dryden. By Robert Lathrop Sharp. University of North Carolina Press. \$3.00.

A study of the transition occurring during the seventeenth century from the prolific imagery and careless abundance of Elizabethan literature to the sobriety and rationality of Dryden. The interpretation is made vivid through the use of rich illustrations from the lives and works of poets of the time.

Defoe's First Poem. By Mary Elizabeth Campbell. Principia Press.

A Doctor's thesis containing a textual analysis and interpretation of "A New Discovery," Defoe's first poem, which this author regards as a revelation of the philosophy and character of a writer much better known by later works.

Windows of the Morning: A Critical Study of William Blake's "Poetical Sketches." By Margaret Ruth Lowery. Yale University Press. \$3.00.

An examination of Blake's indebtedness to other writers and an appraisal of his *Poetical Sketches* in the light of his creative adaptation of the materials which he employed.

A History of Stone and Kimball and Herbert S. Stone and Company, 1893-1905.

By Sidney Kramer. University of Chicago Press. \$4.00.

The history of a famous publishing house valuable because the story coincides with the period of Chicago's literary renaissance in the days of Eugene Field, George Ade, Hamlin Garland, and others. A bibliography of the hundreds of books and magazines published by these firms during this period has been included.

The White Doe of Rylstone, by William Wordsworth. A critical edition by Alice

Pattee Comparetti. Cornell University Press. \$2.50.

An extensive literary analysis and annotated text of a poem which Wordsworth himself regarded as the highest in conception that he had ever produced.

The Party of Humanity. By Edwin Mellers Everett. University of North Carolina Press. \$3.50.

The history of a great liberal humanitarian magazine, the *Fortnightly Review*. Fearless champion of all liberal causes in England, the magazine under the editorship of George Henry Lewes and John Morley attracted such writers as John Stuart Mill, Huxley, Swinburne, Tyndall, and Frederic Harrison. Most prominently reflected in the story is the struggle for the rights of labor and the revolt from religious orthodoxy.

The Quaker Influence in American Literature. By Howard W. Hintz. Revell.

\$1.00.

This book provides a basis for the more expensive study of Quaker influence in American literature and its mysticism and humanitarianism in the work of Penn, Fontaine, Charles Brocken Brown, Cooper, Emerson, Whitman, Whittier, and others.

Some Seventeenth-Century Worthies in a Twentieth-Century Mirror. By R.

Balfour Daniels. University of North Carolina Press. \$2.00.

Twenty-two essays containing wise or whimsical comments on seventeenth-century writers, famous and obscure, who have appealed to the author.

The Concord Saunterer: Including a Discussion of the Nature Mysticism of Thoreau by Reginald Lansing Cook, and Original Letters by Thoreau and a Check List of Thoreau Items, Compiled by Viola T. White. Middlebury College Press. \$1.25.

Appreciative essays on the ideas and personality of the great nonconformist. Lists of Thoreau manuscripts and other Thoreau items found in the Abernethy Library of Middlebury College follow the essays.

FOR THE COLLEGE STUDENT

Patterns in Expository Writing. Edited by Helena Gavin and Edna B. Schwarzman. Woodrow Wilson Junior College (Chicago).

A book of prose models taken chiefly from the writings of junior-college students and classified under such headings as "Expository Narrative," "Reviewing Style," "Practical Description," "Analysis," "Definition," "Criticism," "Discussion." The

selections, which the reader is likely to accept as within the range of his own potentialities, nevertheless embody sound principles of organization and development.

Writing Good English. By Porter G. Perrin and F. Earl Ward. Scott, Foresman. Courses I and II, \$0.65 each; complete course, \$1.00.

A language workbook designed to accompany the textbook in good English. The exercises in Course I deal with reading skills and the use of the library, spelling, the elements of grammar and punctuation, and sentence- and paragraph-building. Course II, after a section of general review, places emphasis upon the steps involved in the preparation and writing of the research paper and the procedure involved in reading for appreciation.

Freshman Prose Annual: Number One. By Robert M. Gay, Mody C. Boatright, and George S. Wykoff. Houghton Mifflin. \$1.00.

Essays and articles of vital concern to thoughtful young Americans classified under such headings as "College and College Life," "Social Adjustments," "Democracy and War," "Science," "Art and Literature" in a book resembling an attractively illustrated modern magazine in size and typography.

A Functional Grammar: Form B. By Nat P. Lawrence, Sherman M. Kuhn, Matthew W. Rosa, and Lawrence Babb. Farrar & Rinehart. \$1.25.

An exercise book designed for remedial work in language with college students. Part I presents the principles of sentence structure; Part II selects twelve of the most common errors in composition for discussion. One-half of the handbook is devoted to tests and exercises.

Business Writing: Theory and Practice. By Charles Chandler Parkhurst. Prentice-Hall. \$3.25.

Practice leaves in business correspondence containing exercises, sample letterheads, and pages for lecture notes dealing with form and content of the numerous types of the business letter. A valuable feature of this workbook is the exceptionally large format.

English Review Grammar. By Walter Kay Smart. 4th ed. Crofts. \$1.25.

A compendium of formal grammar with sentence exercises out of context, following a traditional pattern of organization and stressing nomenclature rather than principles of language development. Mr. Smart does not attempt to cite evidence for the principles enunciated.

The Enjoyment of Drama. By Milton Marx. Crofts. \$1.50.

A delightful introduction to the appreciation and understanding of the structure and types of the drama. The author draws upon a wide knowledge of plays, playwrights, and players from antiquity to modern times for illustrations of his principles, chief among which is the need for evaluating a play or a production as a whole.

A First Course in Practical Business English. By D. Walter Morton and Howard T. Viets. Crofts. \$2.50.

The authors properly devote all but one of the chapters to descriptions and illustrations of various types of commercial correspondence. A concluding chapter deals with effective business reports.

The Short Novel: An Anthology. Edited by John O. Beaty and Nannie M. Fitzhugh. Farrar & Rinehart. \$2.00.

These five short novels—*The Castle of Otranto*, *Castle Rackrent*, *An International Episode*, *Country People*, *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*—illustrate, respectively, the Gothic novel, the novel of local color, a novel of upper-class society, a novel of the north European immigrant, a philosophic novel, and serve at once as introduction to several fictional types and to five famous novelists.

Types and Times in English Literature, Book IV. Edited by Lewis Worthington Smith, Luther W. Courtney, and Elizabeth Fuller. Harlow Publishing Co., Oklahoma City.

Limited selections from the poetry and prose of the Romantic and Victorian periods in English literature.

The Reader's Johnson. Edited by C. H. Conley. American Book. \$2.00.

Extensive selections from the poems and prose writings of Samuel Johnson, including essays from *The Rambler*, *Rasselas*, an abridged version of *The Life of Savage*, *The Life of Poe*, and *Selected Letters*. In general, the arrangement is chronological.

The Morte Darthur by Thomas Malory. Edited by Charles R. Sanders and Charles E. Ward. Crofts. \$1.00.

This abridged version of Malory presents the *Morte Darthur* as a continuous story from the coming of Arthur to the death of Lancelot and Guinevere in a readable text with modern paragraph and section divisions.

Beowulf. Translated into Alliterative Verse with a Critical Introduction. By Charles W. Kennedy. Oxford. \$1.65.

Professor Kennedy retains much of the energy and narrative charm of the oldest English epic in this translation into modern alliterative verse. A fairly extensive introduction describes the historical backgrounds of the poem and provides critical comment.

A Book of Modern Short Stories. Edited by Dorothy Brewster. Macmillan. \$1.00. (Paper.)

Twenty-nine short stories by modern masters like Sherwood Anderson, Willa Cather, James Joyce, Joseph Conrad, Robert Sherwood, Ernest Hemingway, Theodore Dreiser, Ring Lardner, and numerous others, with brief notes on the type of treatment illustrated by each.

Arnold: Poetry and Prose. With William Watson's Poem and Essays. By Lionel Johnson and H. W. Garrod. Introduction and Notes by E. K. Chambers. Oxford University Press. \$1.25.

A representative collection of the poems of Matthew Arnold, including such longer units as *Sohrab and Rustum* and a shorter section of essays and critical prose. The introductory material includes a biographical sketch, Chambers' evaluation of Arnold, and passages from Lionel Johnson's *Liminium* and Garrod's *Poetry and the Criticism of Life*.